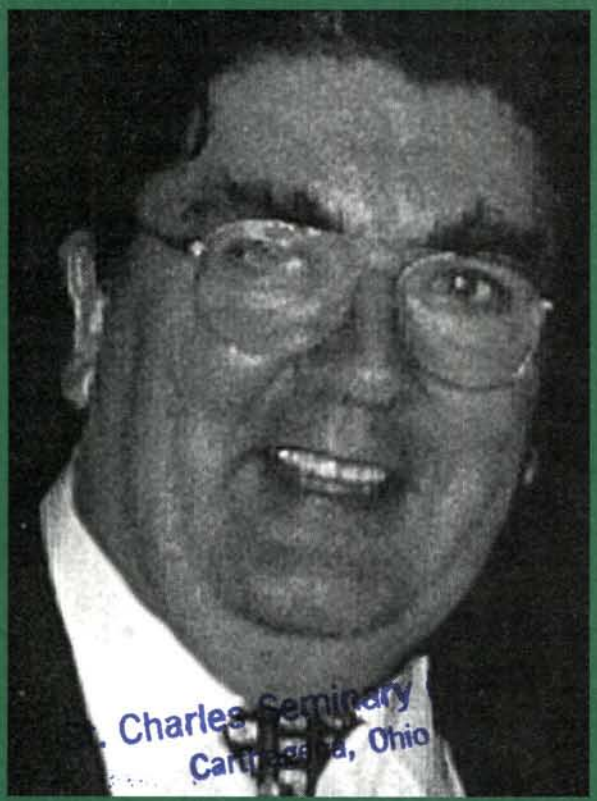
$2.25 November 20, 1998

COMMONWEAL


St. Charles Seminary
Carthagena, Ohio

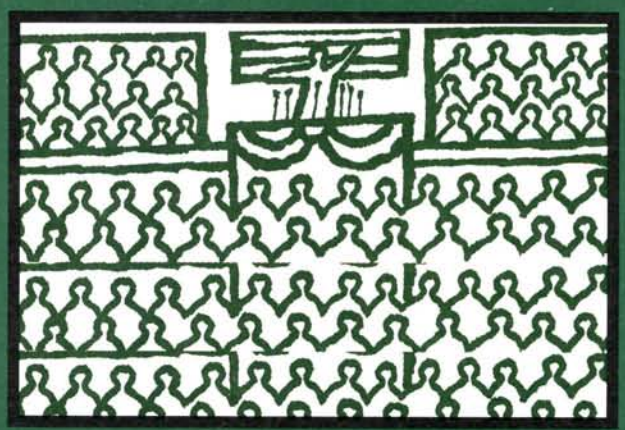
JOHN HUME

Peacemaker

Mary Pat Kelly

'98 Elections

Wilson Carey McWilliams



********** 3-DIGIT 458
0110 CW 00079972 12/18/98
St. Charles Seminary Library
ST. CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY Carthagena, Ohio
2860 US ROUTE 127
CARTHAGENA OH45822-9591

Children's Books

Daria Donnelly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the Editors

What Maggie knew

Thank you for the wonderful article by Dr. Margaret Heagarty ["Beginning Doctors," October 23]. It is a joy to recognize the unflagging commitment and integrity she continues giving to her vocation. The generosity, humor, and style of this "red-faced, white-haired old lady" revealed the young Maggie of the old green sweater who shared insights and opinions with me and her other friends at Seton Hill College. "Dedication" can be a chilly word, but applied to Dr. Heagarty it is as warm and comforting as...as an old green sweater.

ANNE HAENN BEDESSEM
Boonsboro, Md.

The core issue is access

Robert M. Byrn's advocacy piece, "A Calculus of Need: Funding AIDS Research and Care" [October 9] dismisses too easily a more just solution to funding for this disease. The tragedy of AIDS is fast becoming that access to care and drugs will determine who survives this plague. A national health plan would guarantee that all people with AIDS would benefit from additional research, not just those with insurance. Until there is such a plan, we can anticipate more ribbons and more articles claiming exceptional status because this or that disease is unique. But a core tenet of Catholic social teaching stresses what we have in common, a basic human dignity, that cannot be honored by a health-care nonsystem that leaves 40 million of us uninsured. While the vast majority of those of us who favor a national health plan do not do so by "creating resentment," we may be guilty of a degree of envy. We covet the political will of any country that guarantees that people with AIDS, and all citizens, have needed health care.

MICHAEL GRADY, M.D.
Silverton, Oreg.

No privacy for speculation

It seems to me that the letters in recent issues [September 11 and 25] commenting on *Ad tuendam fidem* and *Apostolos suos* miss a salient point: this century's changes in the speed and impact of the communications media.

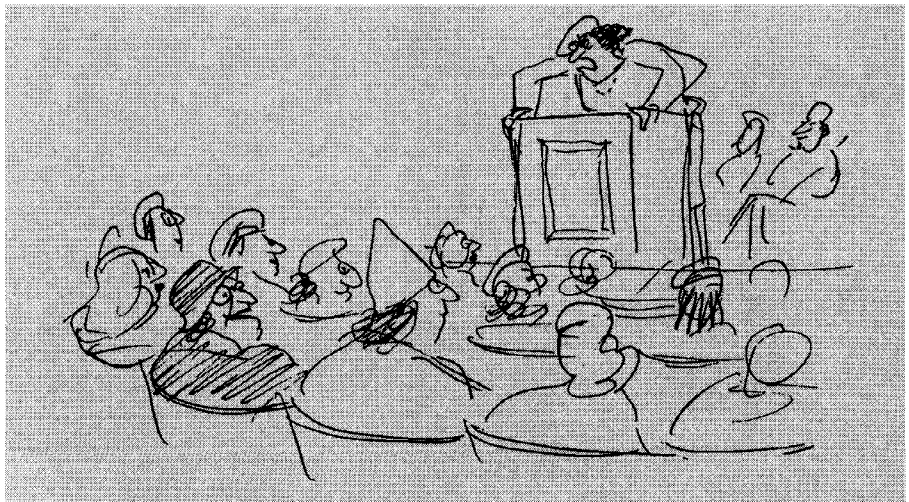
The quotations from Cardinal Newman and others pleading for "space and time" for theologians to develop their thought are very impressive. But in our day and age, "space and time" have been so foreshortened by the media that there is hardly any "time" between the whispering of a daring theological "hypothesis" in a classroom or at a gathering of theologians or in a highly specialized academic journal and its gaining public "space" in the local tabloid or on television, radio, or the Internet. It's relevant as well that the media thrive on any controversy they can find or stir up. Thus the opportunity for dispassionate weighing of arguments is rarer than in the nineteenth and earlier centuries. In the absence of any "private place" for serious innovative theological discussion, all kinds of unripe fruits are exposed in some very strange venues without safeguards, regardless of the individual theologian's wishes.

In that context it seems to me only common sense for the apppropriate pastoral authority to exercise its reponsibility to guard whole and firm the faith of the church, for which it is responsible before God. How theologians can still preserve a freedom to hypothecate is a serious conundrum that cannot be solved by railing against the pastoral authority for doing its duty.

Considering the general and increasing ignorance of the sources (liturgy, the Fathers, the Scriptures), and of the meaning and content of the faith, a theologian today might better serve the church in explaining better what is already agreed on by the ecumenical councils and is found in the "three pillar-sources" than by always seeking novelties, encouraging controversy, and courting publicity. This might seem plodding and boring to some, but it is a necessary work and might even lead to prayer in God's presence.

(REV.) PHILIP J. SANDSTROM
Brussels, Belgium

(Continued on page 4)



"You've got to give her credit. She certainly knows how to deplore things."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FOUNDED 1924

COMMONWEAL

November 20, 1998 / Volume CXXV, Number 20

UPFRONT

Correspondence *On work, health care, God.* 2

Editorials *Odd man out* 5

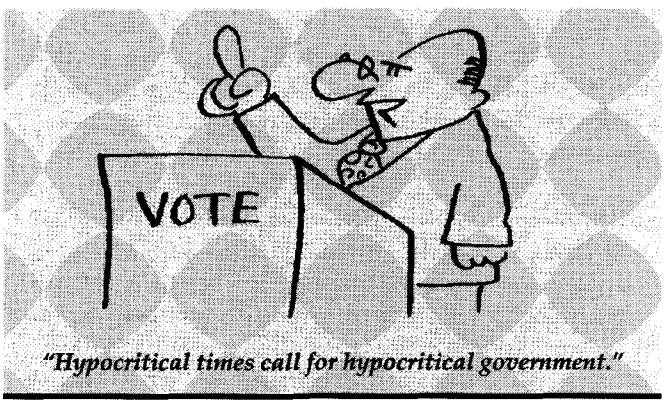
Notebook *Call haters to account* 6
Patrick Jordan

COLUMNIST

Gay bashing
John Garvey 8

SHORT TAKES

Gingrich out
Wilson Carey McWilliams 9



"Hypocritical times call for hypocritical government."

The new Russia
Jeffrey W. Hahn 10

ARTICLES

PEACE ITSELF IS THE PRIZE
Mary Pat Kelly
From dog-track tipster to credit-union founder to Nobel Peace Prize winner, John Hume has run the good race. 12

ARE BISHOPS' PASTORAL LETTERS PASSÉ?
Bruce Martin Russett
A distinguished scholar traces the history of the American bishops' pastoral letter The Challenge of Peace *and wonders if we will ever see its like again.* 14

POETRY

Lordsburg, New Mexico
Robert Cording 16

VERDICTS

SCREEN

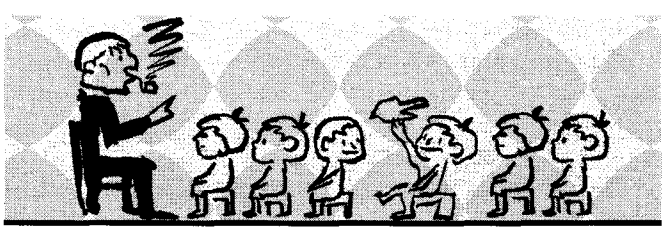
Beloved
Richard Alleva 18

STAGE

Silence
Celia Wren
Shusaku Endo's darkly paradoxical novel is given an American theatrical debut. 20

BOOKS

Geniuses at work
Daria Donnelly
Children's books that thrill the heart and soul of young and old alike. 22



The Death of Outrage
William J. Bennett
David McCabe 26

From the Holy Mountain
William Dalrymple
Paul Kaldjian 28

THE LAST WORD

A match made in heaven
Peter Feuerherd 31

Commonweal • 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115 • (212) 662-4200 • http://www.commonwealmagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from page 2)

A 'temporal' God?

I read Ernan McMullin's October 9 review of John Polkinghorne's book, *Belief in the Age of Science*, with interest. Though Polkinghorne's contribution to the dialogue between religion and science is immense, and fashionable, I'm glad to see that someone besides me is made slightly uneasy by his theology.

In a past *Commonweal* article [August 16, 1996], Polkinghorne postulated that "chance" played—and still plays, I suppose—a great part in how the universe came to be the way it is. He wrote: "When the universe was about a billion years old, there *just happened* [italics mine] to be a little more matter here than there," which eventuated in what we have now. What? It's all an accident?

Besides that, in this latest book, according to McMullin, Polkinghorne sees God as a "temporal Being" who "does not yet know the unformed future..." and is "constantly improvising."

I do not see how these ideas of chance and improvisation are compatible with traditional Christianity's statements that God is not only infinite and eternal, but (as McMullin puts it) "everywhere and at all moments active, each moment equally present to his knowledge and power." (By the way, if it consoles Polkinghorne, these attributes of deity—omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence—are also believed in all Eastern spiritual systems.)

It is not possible to dispense with the basic faith statements Christianity makes about the nature of deity and still call what's left "Christianity," though it seems to be accepted as an option by Polkinghorne and others. In any case, congratulations to McMullin for speaking out.

SALLY CAMPBELL
Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.

Too fertile? Really?

Father John Karsten writes [Correspondence, October 23] of overhearing the reaction of a father of thirteen on learning about natural family planning: "Why didn't they tell me this twenty years ago?" Did he think to ask that patriarch which of his children he found unworthy? Did he determine the opinion of the matriarch?

At the beginning of the century, Irish, Jewish, Italian, and Spanish families tended to be large. Has anyone done a statistical survey correlating the size of families and the level of income? Is it possible that as the comfort level increases, the fertility rate decreases? Are we discussing children, or are we talking about money?

My maternal grandparents had thirteen children. I personally am grateful. Where, as the saying goes, would I be without them? Where would any of us be without our fertile ancestors? I can see they might be embarrassed by our questioning of their habits, though not to the point of wishing us dead. It does seem improper in us to be ashamed of them.

GABRIEL AUSTIN
New York, N.Y.

A vocation to reconcile

It was with sadness that I learned of the passing of Father Edward H. Flannery, my predecessor as director for Catholic-Jewish relations for the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs from 1967 to 1976. He was one of the pioneers of Catholic-Jewish dialogue. His book, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three Centuries of Anti-Semitism*, written at the time of the Second Vatican Council, has been continuously in print ever since.

When I first met Father Flannery in 1973, I experienced a measure of awe, not only at his accomplishments but at the deep sense of spiritual "centeredness" one sensed in him. Truly, there was a touch of greatness about him. We who work in the field today owe him more than we can express. Vatican II's declaration, *Nostra aetate*, could not have been implemented as well as it has been without his guidance in those early, crucial years.

When Father Flannery began his vocation the Catholic church and the Jewish people had been largely estranged for many centuries. He used to say that here in America we have a unique opportunity to move forward the process of healing since we enjoy the world's largest Jewish community alongside a healthy Catholic community. The best way to remember him is by working to continue the process of reconciliation.

EUGENE J. FISHER
Washington, D.C.

An apology

To the Commonweal Associates: In the course of mailing the fall Commonweal Associates Newsletter, a mix-up occurred at our mail house. Instead of the Newsletter, you were sent an appeal to join the Commonweal Associates, of which you are already members. Confusing, no doubt. We apologize.

A follow-up mailing is in progress, and soon you will receive your copies of the fall Newsletter (which is rather newsier than usual).

THE EDITORS AND STAFF

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STAFF

Editor: **Margaret O'Brien Steinfels**
Executive Editor: **Paul Baumann**
Managing Editor: **Patrick Jordan**
Production Editor: **Tiina Aleman**
Senior Writer: **Robert G. Hoyt**
Business Manager: **Gregory Wilpert**
Poetry: **Rosemary Deen**
Design: **Emil Antonucci**
Screen: **Richard Alleva**
Media: **Frank McConnell**
Stage: **Celia Wren**
Columnists: **John Garvey, Abigail McCarthy, E.J. Dionne, Jr., Sidney Callahan, William Pfaff**
Interns: **Christian Zwahlen, Andrew Rosato, Maurice Timothy Reidy**
Staff: **Harriette Balsky, Carmen P. Alava, Sandra Smith**
Advertising Manager: **Ruth E. Taylor**
Publisher Emeritus: **Edward S. Skillin**

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY, 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, ME 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 1998 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $47; foreign, $50. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Kelly, Antonucci, Aleman; pp. 2, 30, Ross, Rothco; pp. 3, 28, Baloo, Rothco; pp. 3, 20, Jerry Westhauser; pp. 3, 14, Charlot; p. 6, Engleman, Rothco; pp. 7, 22, 24, Valerry; pp. 9, 26, Schwadron, Rothco; p. 11, Origone, Rothco; p. 12, Willie Carson; columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

http://www.commonwealmagazine.org

Odd man out

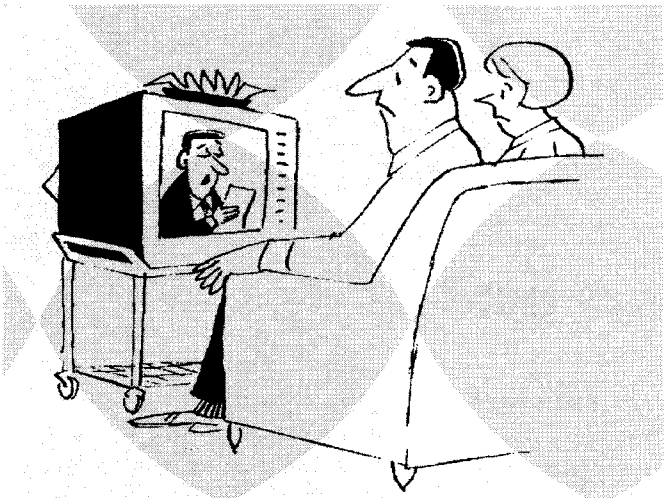
Deciphering the meaning of a national election after the fact is about as exact a science as predicting its outcome beforehand. Just ask the dozens of pundits who confidently foretold Republican gains in both the House and the Senate in this month's congressional elections. Or ask Newt Gingrich. The Republican speaker, tempted by the prospect of President Bill Clinton's impeachment, bet a good deal of political capital on the Monica Lewinsky scandal. But in the wake of an election in which the Democratic party held its own in the Senate and, remarkably, picked up five seats in the House, it was Gingrich, not Clinton, who felt compelled to resign. House Republicans—bitterly split among right-wing libertarians, social and religious conservatives, and more moderate factions—demanded the head of the man who had engineered the dramatic Republican takeover of the House in 1994. Many will call this reversal poetic justice—Gingrich was never one to weep over the fate of his political opponents. And to the extent that Gingrich's penchant for demonizing "liberals," polarizing political discourse, and delegitimizing government have contributed to widespread cynicism about politics altogether, it is hard not to see his downfall as just punishment.

But the turmoil within the Republican party and the momentary shift in political momentum to the Democrats also reminds us of how mercurial the American electorate has become and how unreliable the conventional wisdom often is. The Republican party remains in control of both houses of Congress, and the popularity of so many ideologically moderate Republican governors as well as the GOP's enormous advantage in fundraising leaves the Republicans in a commanding position nationally. Yes, the antagonism between Republicans pushing a traditional moral agenda and those content to preach the gospel of low taxes is serious. But any significant erosion in support for the so-called Reagan revolution will be better measured by the results of the 2000 presidential race. Until then, reports of the demise of the Republican party are greatly exaggerated.

Still, as Wilson Carey McWilliams reports in this issue (page 9), the election did bring genuine good news for Democrats after months of pummeling over the Clinton scandals. Appealing to their traditional constituencies with a carefully targeted grassroots get-out-the-vote campaign, the Democrats saw blacks, Hispanics, and union members turn up at the polls in near-record numbers. As a result, Democrats defeated better-funded incumbent Republican Senators Alfonse D'Amato in New York and Lauch Faircloth in North Carolina, took governorships in California, Georgia, and Alabama, and retained important Senate seats in California and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, for example, 31 percent of those voting came from union households—only 12 percent of the nation's workforce is unionized. Sixty-three percent of Wisconsin's union voters pulled the lever for Russell Feingold, the Senate Democrat who championed campaign finance reform and refused to accept "soft" money. Even in the age of relentless polling and TV "attack" ads, shrewd political organizing can make a difference.

To what extent the election was a vote for or against Bill Clinton is hard to judge, but Republicans and Democrats alike read the results as a rebuke of the Starr in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"A special prosecutor has been appointed to investigate the American public...!"

vestigation and the attempt to exploit the scandal for partisan purposes. Denied a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate and facing a razor-thin majority in the House, the Republicans are now expected to move ``expeditiously'' on impeachment hearings. Or so goes the conventional wisdom. Whether the new House Republican leadership will be able to finesse the impeachment process now set in motion remains to be seen.

Referenda in the states on physician-assisted suicide, gambling, and abortion also produced mixed results. Sensing the potential for abuse, Michigan voters defeated a proposal that would have legalized physician-assisted suicide, leaving Oregon the only place where so-called mercy killing is legal. Assisted suicide is an issue that will continue to be decided on a state-by-state basis. The educational and organizational efforts that proved so effective in Michigan, including those by the state's Catholic bishops, need to be emulated.

Voters in California, endorsing an indeflectable national trend, approved an expansion of casino gambling. In little more than a decade the United States has gone from a nation where gambling was actively discouraged by law and public morality—and consequently confined to a single state—to the headlong embrace of virtually every kind of "gaming." In promoting their own state lotteries as a way to raise revenue without raising taxes, state governments bear a large responsibility for this. But gambling's social costs—in ruined lives and broken families, vice, political corruption, and the subtle but real assault on our sense of work and responsibility—are becoming more apparent.

Finally, the 1998 election was another political setback for the prolife movement. Most disturbing, voters in Washington state overwhelmingly defeated a referendum that would have outlawed the most indefensible of third-trimester abortions. It is increasingly hard to imagine any effective restriction of abortion that could be enacted into law in the United States. Equally disturbing is the way many Democratic candidates crudely caricatured and exploited the prolife positions of their Republican opponents. Especially egregious were Charles Schumer's cynical manipulation of the issue in New York and Senator Barbara Boxer's outright distortion of her opponent's views in California.

Among Republicans, the rise of the essentially prochoice gubernatorial wing of the party, most prominently represented by the Bush brothers and New York Governor George Pataki, signals a significant further consolidation of current abortion policy. A majority of Americans are clearly tired of the endless rancor surrounding abortion, and eager to depoliticize the issue. The effort to use the law to restrict abortion looks more and more like a dead end. In many respects, the prolife movement, especially those who resort to inflammatory rhetoric and tactics, are responsible for this ongoing political failure. Until the face of the prolife movement is softened and its language becomes less condemnatory and more persuasive, no significant change in the law or decrease in the the number of abortions is likely.

As Wilson Carey McWilliams reminds us, Americans continue to vote for divided government and remain deeply skeptical of any politics that might articulate some larger "vision" of how we should order our lives together as a people. Given good economic times and limited foreign entanglements, this lack of consensus may suffice for the time being. Governing from the "vital center" is a time-honored American tradition—as well as a cliché. But the spectacle of the Republicans scrambling to find "friendlier faces," and Clinton's history of backing away from a fight whenever his polling so dictates, raises the question of whether either party can distinguish between governing from the middle and simple political expediency.

NOTEBOOK

CALL HATERS TO ACCOUNT

A case for bias-crime laws

The brutal murder last month of Matthew Shepard—the twenty-one-year-old gay college student in Wyoming who was beaten and tied to a cross-like fence to die—struck at the conscience of the nation. It was not only the sheer sadism and rancor of the crime that affected Americans, but the sense that Shepard's rights had been violated simply for being who he was.

Hate-motivated crimes have their own pedigree, their own smell. They are acts of criminal violence—among them kidnapping, torture, and murder—but their destructive capacity stems from a motivational intensity that sets them apart. When James Byrd, Jr., a disabled African-American, was dragged to his death in Jasper, Texas, last June, every reflective American knew instinctively that this crime was motivated by a particular loathing born of prejudice.

Crimes of this sort can be triggered by a victim's demeanor, color, status, ethnicity, speech, etc., which become the pretext for unleashing blind fury. For potential victims, the threat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of such violence is a constant source of vulnerability, unease, fear, even terror. These violent acts of bigotry demand forceful and consistent redress, for they strike at the heart of the solidarity that binds society together; they undermine the very notion of equality.

Twenty-one states have laws that increase the penalties for hate crimes related to race, religion, color, national origin, and sexual orientation. A further nineteen have laws that cover most of the above, but not sexual orientation, even though the F.B.I. reports that 12 percent of hate crimes in 1996 had to do with sexual orientation, and the Southern Poverty Law Center calculates that bias attacks against gays and lesbians are more than twice as likely as similarly motivated attacks on African-Americans, more than six times as likely as those directed at Jews and Hispanics. Ten states, Wyoming among them, have no such laws, and thoughtful people argue they are not needed. In Wyoming, after all, the death penalty is in force for murder, and criminals should be punished for their deeds, not their beliefs.

But whereas the rate of violent crime in general has been falling nationally, violence against gays, lesbians, and transsexuals has been on the rise. Last year in New York City, for example, violent crime fell 10 percent while antigay violence rose by 14 percent, according to the National Coalition of Antiviolence Programs (NCAVP), a gay advocacy group. When a Wyoming legislator likens homosexuals to gay bulls—worthless except to be sent off to the packing plant—the likelihood of a decline in bias crimes is not improved.

Those who question the legality and wisdom of hate-crime legislation, such as columnist George Will, contend that present statutes are sufficient to prosecute hate-motivated crimes, and that to codify "an ever-more elaborate structure of identity politics" will not only prove costly but will enhance divisiveness. Others argue that such statutes diminish the constitutional protection against double jeopardy for the same crime. Still another caveat is that such legislation might limit individuals' free speech. In fact, Matthew Shepard's father, Dennis Shepard, warned after his son's death that legislators should not rush to pass "all kinds of new hate-crime laws. Be sure," he said, "you're not taking away any rights of others...."

Yet, as Will grants, "law has the expressive function of stigmatizing particular conduct." Bias-crime laws are less about punishment than about deterrence. Law sends a powerful and effective message that society will not tolerate certain acts. Brian Levin of Stockton College's Center on Hate and Extremism notes that a Boston statute cut hate crimes by two-thirds. A further consideration concerns local and state officials who fail to assure citizens' rights. When there is an absence of federal oversight, victims may lack adequate recourse. Proponents of the proposed Hate-Crimes Prevention Act of 1998 (S. 1529) argue that while many local jurisdictions have attempted to respond to hate-motivated violence, the problem is sufficiently serious and widespread to warrant federal intervention. To shield citizens from the double-jeopardy conundrum, S. 1529 specifically excluded "duplicate punishment for substantially the same offense."

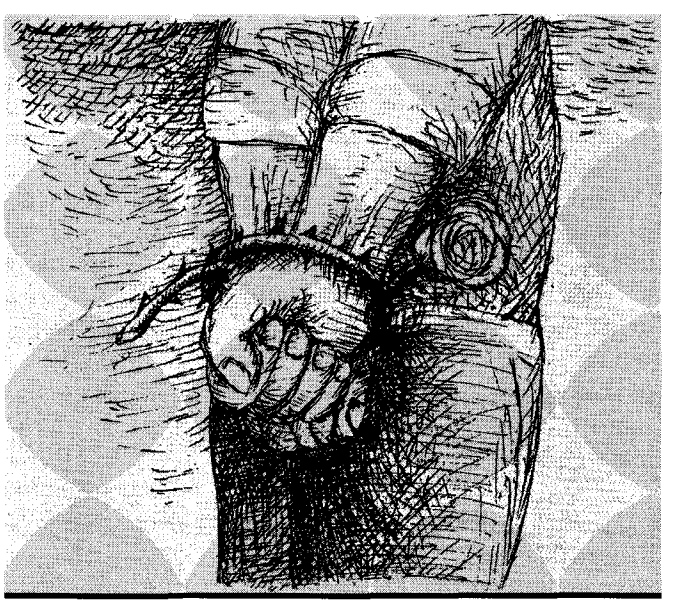
There are other reasons to support federal involvement besides the fact that homosexuals suffer higher rates of violent hate crime than any other group. One is that violence against gays is more often directed at their persons than at their property. Whereas the Anti-Defamation League reports that 55 percent of anti-Jewish incidents are against persons, the NCAVP offers evidence that 95 percent of violence against gays is directed at their persons.

Another reason to support such legislation is the matter of who will protect victims when local enforcement agencies are themselves biased. In 1997, only 24 percent of antigay incidents tracked nationally by the NCAVP were reported to the police (half the percentage-rate for reporting violent crime in general) because gays feared going to the authorities. Of those gays who did try to file, 12 percent stated that the local police refused to register their complaints; and of those who actually managed to file, almost half said they had been treated indifferently or with hostility. Worse, according to the NCAVP, incidents of antigay abuse by the police themselves jumped nationally from 266 in 1996 to 468 last year.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC)—no stranger to combating crimes of hate—has noted that proposed federal legislation would continue to leave responsibility for protecting citizens' rights primarily with state and local agencies; and that federal prosecution in hate-crime cases has been used only sparingly in the past (6 percent of incidents). Yet the cumulative effect of such federal laws, the AJC points out, has enhanced deterrence, particularly in states that lack laws or do not enforce them.

The murder of Matthew Shepard was not the first and will not be the last crime of its kind. But it should shake our indifference and lead to actions that reduce such crimes. While legislation itself will not change all hearts, it might send a powerful message to some hate-twisted minds.

PATRICK JORDAN



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN GARVEY

GAY BASHING

Once I had a friend...

The murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming brought back a sharp and sad memory. When I was about to go to college, a friend of the family gave me a gift—a book of Rilke's poems—and I appreciated it deeply. He had always impressed me as being one of our family's more interesting friends, which, when you are at the late adolescent stage, is to say that he shared some of my interests. One night I was at a party at his house, and he was in a confiding mood. He was telling me what a good time I would have in college. He talked, laughing at the memory, about how he and his friends would go to a bar, "a fairy hangout," he called it, and allow the homosexual patrons to buy them drinks. Then, at a signal, they would rise, beat up the homosexuals, and leave.

I remembered feeling sick. This was a man I had liked, and now I knew he could never be my friend, and I could never again respect him. He made himself an alien. I had the same odd feelings about homosexuality most straight kids do; I didn't understand it, and I had been the object of a couple of homosexual passes, one from a priest in the high school I attended. Homosexuality, and people I knew at that time to be homosexual, made me uncomfortable. I didn't know, then, that one of my best friends was gay. But, that wasn't the point. The scorn, the cruelty, the willingness to beat up homosexuals distressed me. I found it harder to understand than homosexuality, which, though it made me uncomfortable, didn't harm me. I did feel, in an oblique sort of way, harmed by someone willing to beat people, someone willing to be violent because...

Because why? I understand that some people, ambivalent about their own sexual identity, feel so threatened by homosexuality that they react violently. I don't think that's always the case, though. In the case of our family friend it had to do with a sanctioning of cruelty which would never otherwise be accepted, a cruelty he enjoyed. I don't think he felt threatened. I think he knew he could get away with this. What this has in common with any murder based on racial grounds, or because someone belongs to a despised religion, is scorn, and the belief that some people are fair game solely because of who they are, or how they are perceived, and because there is a certain sort of person who enjoys causing pain as long as there will be no penalty for it.

In one sense, the murder of Matthew Shepard is like the death of the homeless men who have been set on fire by kids who thought they could get away with it. It is the murder of someone considered not to be like us, someone we make to be not like us by showing them the ultimate contempt, by trying to make them not be at all. It may have been caused by the murderer's own sexual ambivalence, but it could also have come from the enjoyment of, the delight in, contempt. By associating it with fear or some other irrational emotional reaction, we dignify it. There may be simply evil acts, enjoyed because they can be done with no risk. Think of the masked murders in Northern Ireland and in Rwanda. You can get away with it, given what's in the air. Evil is about making everything nothing.

At the same time, space is made for these acts by the discomfort we feel for the different, for the people who make some of us uncomfortable. With regard to homosexuality, there is now a crude either/or which no one addresses very well. People who oppose homosexual marriage are unfairly put in the same corral with Shepard's murderers, on the one hand, and on the other, anyone who tries to suggest that many of society's attitudes and fears about homosexuality are exaggerated and even dangerous are called enemies of the family. I would put in a word for divorce as the family's greatest enemy, but too many politicians who are at risk in that area prefer to target gays.

I am not sure what anyone can do about this, but the churches have sent mixed messages. It is distressing, though probably not surprising, that sex is a more compelling interest for religious people than compassion.

At the same time, I have heard people I respect say that they are troubled by homosexuality because of its otherness, because they can't identify with it, because they can't imagine themselves there. But our discomfort should not be the standard we use in approaching our many complicated heterosexual and homosexual fellow Christians. We should resist a culture (gay or straight) which allows us to define the totality of another person in terms of sexual orientation.

The church should be humble about what it can and can't say here. If the only form of sexual activity we can bless is monogamous heterosexual marriage, we must still make some distinctions. To act as if a gay married couple living together faithfully for twenty years were no different from someone involved in a promiscuous bathhouse scene—or, for that matter, to think of a promiscuous heterosexual as somehow healthier than a faithful homosexual—is really perverse. Many churchgoers are more tolerant of young unmarried heterosexuals (unmarried often because of the broken marriages they have lived through) who live together than they are of gay couples under any circumstances. Why? Shouldn't we bring compassion to all of this, even as we say that sexual asceticism (meaning the possibility of celibacy, as difficult as that idea is) may be demanded of some of those who make up the church? And that it might be helpful to suggest its possibility? Our culture, at every level, has done a lot to mess us up in almost every conceivable way, where sexuality is concerned, and being clear about any of this will have to involve a lot more than hate legislation. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wilson Carey McWilliams

GINGRICH OUT

Democrats not quite in

Democrats are still dancing, but deep down they know that they didn't win in 1998, although the Republicans surely *lost*. There are plenty of reasons for Democratic celebration, of course: for the first time since the high tide of the New Deal, the party controlling the White House made off-year gains in the House of Representatives and Newt Gingrich, having set out to dethrone the president, ending by losing the speakership, although he may—Democrats hope—have presidential ambitions himself. Contrary to their own expectations, Democrats did not suffer a net loss of seats in the Senate. The impeachment hearings will be shuffled offstage as soon as Republicans can find some face-saving formula for doing so. And in California, Democrats won the Big Casino, electing Gray Davis governor—including a titanic majority among Latino voters—with the likelihood of controlling that state's redistricting after the census in 2000.

Republicans, of course, can take comfort—about as satisfying as an extra bowl of gruel—in winning gubernatorial elections in the other big states, and with some attractive candidates like the Bush boys in Texas and Florida, George Pataki in New York, and Tom Ridge in Pennsylvania. They managed, too, to unseat Senator Carol Mosely-Braun (D-Ill.), and they did hold onto the House, though in both cases by very small majorities.

For the country, the election is pretty much a wash. Substituting Robert Livingston (R-La.) for Gingrich will mean a more pragmatic leadership in the House, but Dick Armey's (R-Tex.) challengers for the post of majority leader—Steve Largent (R-Okla.) is currently the most visible—are also conservative zealots, although more telegenic than Armey. If the Senate will be a better place for Lauch Faircloth's (R-S.C.) absence, Al D'Amato's (R-N.Y.) defeat means that he—a senator who never let a principle stand in the way of a good deal—will be replaced as chair of the Banking Committee by Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), an ideological zealot so unattractive that it is said even his friends dislike him. Senator Russell Feingold's (D-Wis.) close call, after his principled refusal to accept outside contributions, is bad news for campaign reform, but Massachusetts and Arizona did vote for public funding. And Oregon, in the hope of increasing the number of voters, approved a proposal to hold elections solely by mail ballot, an idea with good intentions that will further privatize politics, eliminating one of our few public rituals.

In general, however, the year ended as it began, as a good election for incumbents. Most voters feel that things are going well, for the country if not for their own households. Their state of mind isn't quite the "contented apathy" that Mervin Field, the California pollster, suggests: in fact, their comparative prosperity only emphasizes the voters' sense that things could easily get worse. They don't see any immediate crisis, but they do dislike HMOs, worry about education and Social Security, and fret especially about the quality and security of jobs. (It was a major contributor to the Democrats' comparative success that union members made up 22 percent of the voters this year, as opposed to 14 percent in the disaster of 1994; similarly, voters in Washington approved an annual inflation-adjusted increase in the minimum wage.) But whatever their discontents, voters do not have, and surely are not hearing, any vision of change for the better, so that they get the shivers from any talk of rocking the boat. Wall Street, after all, implicitly has been voting Democratic in presidential politics all year, applauding any turn of events in Clinton's favor. The mood of the electorate made Gray Davis, who raises colorlessness to the level of an art form, into an easy winner. Of course, there are limits. In Minnesota, "Skip" Humphrey, worthy but deadly dull, lost to Jesse Ventura, who is neither a dolt—the media aside—nor a statesman, but is certainly entertaining. On the whole, Democrats had a slight but significant advantage in an electorate dominated by *temperamental* conservatives.

The president's missteps gave the Republicans a chance to tip the balance decisively in their favor, especially since they had so much more money than their opponents ("I thought the money was going to kill us," Dick Gephardt admitted in an election postmortem), and back late August, most commentators—me included—thought they would. But the Republicans, especially because their constituency features *ideological* conservatives, made two crucial mistakes.

In the first place, although they knew the Lewinsky scandal was dangerous, they overplayed their hand. Partly because they—and even more, their conservative supporters—wanted the president's blood, they allowed themselves to seem partisan and extreme, even though most voters have consistently wanted the mess to go away. And probably influenced by wishful thinking, they badly miscalculated the effect of releasing the president's videotaped testimony. Since the president is always so plausible a talker, giving him a na-

"Oh, the usual slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. How was your day?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional forum was almost necessarily a bad calculation. Even more important, the dramaturgy of the videotape presented the president as the only human face, alone and beleaguered, defending himself against an intrusive, relentless, impersonal voice: it was a scene out of Kafka, making the president into a stand-in for Everyman facing power that is both invisible and malign, the dark nightmare of mass society.

Second, having staked so much of the attack on the president's misdeeds, the Republicans did not do much of anything *else*. They ran, essentially, as the anti-Clinton party, with no other visible issues. It's my guess that this strategy, when conceived, seemed terribly clever: it allowed Republicans to dodge any too-public emphasis on the agenda of social conservatives, concerns which put off many moderates and independents. The problem, obviously, is that it left the Republicans looking empty—and worse, *unpredictable*—especially since a great many voters, with admirable good sense, did not hold Democrats responsible for Clinton's personal conduct and did hold the G.O.P. responsible for what they saw as the inaction or extremism of Congress.

Moreover, it was the wrong year to cold-shoulder the social conservatives, since Democrats, especially in the South, had been particularly active in recruiting candidates who champion a good many conservative values. Republicans still got a large majority of religious conservatives, of course, but the Democratic percentage among such voters went up sharply, and sometimes decisively. (Occasionally too, Republicans didn't put *enough* distance between themselves and the Right: in California, it almost certainly hurt Matt Fong's promising and very moderate Senate campaign against Barbara Boxer to have contributed substantially to a virulently antigay, militantly rightist PAC.)

At the same time, the Republicans' last-minute anti-Clinton blitz helped energize Clinton supporters who, even if they can't stand the president, like his enemies even less. This backfiring effect was particularly evident in relation to black voters, who tend to be protective about the president for all his vacillations, the strongest voice for racial equality to occupy the White House since L.B.J. Turnout among African-Americans was critical in many states, notably in Georgia where they are 24 percent of registered voters but this year made up 29 percent of the electorate; or in Maryland, where voters in Baltimore made an easy winner out of the otherwise embattled governor, Parris Glendening. And in Illinois, African-American turnout let Carol Mosely-Braun make a decent race.

Moderate Republicans, beyond blaming their leaders, are already assigning responsibility to what they see as the party's too-close commitment to social conservatism. But the religious right has an appropriate rejoinder. After all, conservatives had their successes in 1998: in Washington, one of the more liberal states, voters passed an initiative against affirmative action and defeated Grethe Cammermeyer, a highly visible, openly lesbian candidate for Congress. Gay marriage lost on the ballot, even in Hawaii, and equal-rights ordinances protecting sexual orientation lost almost everywhere. And the Right can point to the victory of some of its champions, like the egregious Helen Chenoweth (R-Idaho). The leaders of the religious right argue that Republicans suffered, not because they were conservative, but because they had nothing to say beyond a few declamations about lower taxes, offering no moral or principled version of the public good.

In that much, they're right. Most Americans are at least mildly comfortable, but they aren't happy. They think that Clinton is doing a "good job," but as a person, they regard him as flawed, contemptible, or both, and they also say that his leadership is wounded almost beyond healing. In the electorate's estimation, in other words, there won't be any bridges to the next century, particularly none that call for sacrifice. Americans expect, probably correctly, that, at least where public institutions are concerned, the country will be confronting the next century flatfooted, without the running start that might give democracy the chance to shape or govern the direction of things. The president loves to quote from the Book of Proverbs, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It is to be hoped that he, and both parties, can find more than rhetorical space for that teaching, here on the edge of the millennium. □

Wilson Carey McWilliams *teaches political science at Rutgers University and is a frequent contributor to* Commonweal.

Jeffrey W. Hahn

THE NEW RUSSIA

A work in progress

The problems in Russia which the media have focused on (mostly since the events of August) are serious, especially in areas of finance. Russia's inability to pay its debts (it owed 109 billion rubles in short-term notes and could repay only 37 billion rubles) resulted in effectual devaluation, inflation (consumer prices rose 38 percent in September), and shortages. Thirty percent of the population is reported to be living in poverty—rates are higher in the countryside than in the cities—and the figure is growing. Gross Domestic Product fell 10 percent in September following an 8 percent drop in August, and the grain harvest is about 50 percent below last year's. The financial crisis had immediate political repercussions. Yeltsin fired his government and engaged in prolonged political warfare with parliament before appointing a new administration. Reports in the media suggest that Russia is on the verge of collapse and that a return to Soviet communism is a cause for Western concern. How accurate is this picture?

We need to put these difficulties, serious as they are, in a larger context. Specifically, we need to see Russia as a work in progress, a society in transition. To help do this, it may be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

useful to compare Russia in 1998, politically and economically, with Russia before 1990, a scant eight years ago. Soviet Russia had no free and fair elections; since 1990 there have been two presidential elections, two for parliament, and local elections for legislatures and for governors. All were competitive and largely free and fair. Soviet Russia was a one-party system; Russia today is a multiparty system reflecting a true contestation of political ideas. In Soviet Russia there was a rubber-stamp parliament that voted unanimously for everything put before it; today's parliament agrees unanimously on nothing, engaging in agenda setting, debate, and oversight. Today's Russia is characterized by the principle of judicial review and is guided by the principle, if not always practiced, of equality before the law. Soviet Russia was an unfree society lacking basic civil rights; today's Russia acknowledges in law, and—to a much greater extent than before—in practice, freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and of assembly, including demonstrations. On the economic side, whatever problems there are, state ownership has been largely replaced by private ownership; economic decisions are no longer made by the state planning agency, GOSPLAN, but (however imperfectly) by the marketplace; in place of a fixed exchange rate, the ruble is convertible and remains so, despite the current crisis.

Let me put all of this in a personal context. Since 1990, I have been conducting field research in Yaroslavl, Russia, an ancient provincial capital located about two hundred miles northeast of Moscow on the Volga River. In the first years, there was nothing in the stores. I got up to stand in a thirty-minute line at 6 A.M. to buy milk in zero-degree weather. No restaurants, no retail sales, no beer; I brought my food and supplies with me from Moscow, where there were foreign currency stores. Transportation was on foot or on overflowing, crumbling buses. The city still felt the heavy hand of the local party *nomeklatura* and permission was required for everything.

Contrast this state of affairs with my last visit in June 1998. Stores were full. I had breakfast at McDonalds. I drank beer with my friend, Sasha, in a brightly decorated outdoor café, and with other Russian friends at a lovely underground restaurant in the university. Imported cars scattered people like chickens in the streets; everywhere there was construction, and reconstruction. A democratically elected mayor presided competently over the city and met regularly with a democratically elected city council. I have traveled to Yaroslavl every year from 1990 to 1998, and in June 1998 Yaroslavl never looked lovelier or worked better, although my friends there tell me they, too, have been adversely affected by the recent events. The point of all this is not that everything in Russia is fine; it obviously isn't. Rather it is to remind us that Russia has come a very long way in a short period of time.

What of the future? The crisis, I believe, is a temporary one reflecting the vulnerability of an emerging market and a transitional society in a period of global recession. I see no return to the authoritarian party-state communism of the Soviet period (Leninism), because there is no real constituency for it. Not even the main supporters of the present-day Communist Party of the Russian Federation, namely the pensioners who make up the large majority of those you see on TV demonstrating against the government in Red Square, want to go back to Stalinism. What they want is more of a safety net, something akin to the democratic socialist variant one finds in Europe. In any case, to calculate harshly, it is the older generation that supports Communist leaders; as a result of inevitable demographic change, their numbers will decline. The 1996 presidential election can be seen as a referendum of sorts on a return to Soviet communism. The 40-percent vote for the Communist party standard-bearer, Gennadi Ziuganov, is probably as much as it will ever get.

There has been a good deal of journalistic hand wringing about a rising "red tide" in Russia's new government. Not only has the new prime minister, Evegeni Primakov, made present and former Communists part of his government, but he has talked about the need for greater government regulation of the economy. He wants to restore Russian national interests to the forefront of foreign policy. Despite these worries, if he is able to restore the state's authority, Primakov may actually be what Russia needs right now.

How does he propose to do this? Some early indications are apparent. They include cracking down on tax cheats and collecting revenues, regulating banks, putting teeth into a Russian SEC and insuring transparency in the Russian stock market, ensuring law and order, temporarily monopolizing certain sectors of the economy such as alcohol production, making regional elites comply with federal law and the Constitution. If Primakov moves decisively, he may succeed in reestablishing a state system that can make laws and ensure compliance, minimal standards of state capacity. This may come as hard medicine for advocates of a pure free market, but I wouldn't be surprised if Primakov looks a lot better to them in six months to a year than he does now.

One poll after another has shown that Russians want "a strong leader." Many have interpreted this to mean that Russians want to return to an authoritarian system. I disagree. If I were a Russian, I would want a strong leader in this environment, someone who, within the framework of a limited government, can get the job done. □

Jeffrey W. Hahn *is a member of the political science department at Villanova University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PEACE ITSELF IS THE PRIZE

A Nobel for John Hume

Mary Pat Kelly

It was a great day to be in Derry. All week, speculation about the Nobel Peace Prize had been a part of every conversation as headlines in the Belfast papers tipped John Hume as the most likely recipient. But there was still the fear of jinxing the outcome so that oblique references were the order of the day. "Any news about it?" John Hume's answer to those who alluded to the possibility was, "The peace itself is the prize." As late as the night before, Hume waved off any attempts at handicapping the race. When a friend toasted "you know what," he shook his head. Surely, he said, the committee had already notified the winner; after all, the announcement was now only twelve hours away. A young French journalist replied that no, this was one secret that did not leak. Until the announcement in Oslo at 10 A.M. on October 16, no one would know for sure. Again Hume repeated that although international recognition for the peace process in Northern Ireland would be a wonderful thing, because it could help strengthen that process, he had not entered politics thirty years before expecting prizes or rewards.

Which was a good thing, because there were none going for that young teacher drawn into the electoral fray by a sense of responsibility to the people of the city who had shaped him. "My life changed because I passed an exam," he says. The British Labor government had introduced free education in 1947 for those who qualified by scoring well on the "11+" exam. He did and entered Saint Columb's College, a grammar school (grades seven through twelve). Hume attended with Seamus Heaney, who would win the 1996 Nobel Prize for literature. Heaney recalled this early connection: "When I knew John Hume at Saint Columb's College, Derry, in the 1950s, he already displayed the qualities that led him to this new eminence. You had the impression of somebody with a very steady moral and intellectual keel under him, somebody reliable and consistent, who operated from a principled and definite mental center" (*Irish News*, October 17).

This does not negate the lighter side of that boy. His Aunt Bella, his sisters, and the "mates" he grew up with in the Glen remember him as a great singer and storyteller. He was enterprising enough to act as a tipster for the U.S. Marines, based in a camp near his street during World War II, when they attended races at the illegal greyhound track nearby. "I was so wee," Humes recalls, "that no one noticed me watching to see which dog would get a shot from Dr. Iodine. I told the Marines, *that's the winner—bet on him*! Afterwards, they gave me sweets to take home. They taught us all to play baseball."

All the while, though, he was aware of the injustice that blighted the lives of his family and neighbors. His father could find no employment in a city where Catholic men were denied jobs while their wives worked in shirt factories to support their families. Annie Doherty Hume did piecework at home while raising her seven children. John Hume remembers the exorbitant rates of interest she and her sisters paid shopkeepers for food and clothes bought on credit. He would cite these as the reason he founded Derry's first credit union and then helped spark the credit-union movement throughout Ireland. He served as the president of the Credit Union League of Ireland from 1964 to 1968. He still considers this one of his proudest accomplishments: "If I had done nothing else in public life, my work with the credit unions would satisfy me."

Next came housing. Because of gerrymandering and a local electoral system that granted votes only to those who paid property taxes, Catholics had little voice in the municipal government that decided who would get a house. "Housing had to be taken out of the hands of politicians." The first

Mary Pat Kelly *is a writer and filmmaker. Her recently published novel is* Special Intentions *(Du Four Editions).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

civil rights marches had this as a goal. In addition, Hume helped form a cooperative that built hundreds of new units—a feat government had said was impossible. Simultaneously came the crusade for "one person, one vote." Hume, as a young teacher living at home where his father as the rent payer had the only vote, had watched the Unionist mayor of Derry cast forty-seven votes—one for himself and the others allotted to him because of the businesses he owned.

Hume modeled his civil rights activities on those of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a commitment for nonviolent change was his "principled and definite mental center." When it became obvious that he should stand as a candidate for the Northern Ireland Parliament, Hume hung back. He often referred to a nationalist rally he had gone to with his father as a child. He had been stirred by the speeches, the music, the flags and banners. But his father warned, "Stay away from all that, son. People can't eat a flag."

But progress in jobs, housing, and education depended on representation. So on February 24, 1969, Hume won the first of many elections. Since 1979 he has represented Northern Ireland in the European Parliament (*see Commonweal*, December 14, 1984 for a discussion of his second campaign for Europe), and since 1983 he has served as member of the House of Commons for the constituency of Foyle, which includes Derry. As he reformed and rebuilt his city, however, logic told him that without peace no real progress was possible. He analyzed the problem and came up with principles that sound so simple that critics sometimes miss their profundity. Difference is an accident of birth. Accommodation of difference is the only answer. There can be no such thing as victory in a divided society. The island of Ireland without its people is just a piece of earth—it's a divided people that must be united through agreement and respect for diversity. Identify yourself by what you are instead of what you are not. Irish patriotism has too often meant dying for Ireland. John Hume wanted young people to live for Ireland, to shed their sweat, not their blood.

Irish patriotism has too often meant dying for Ireland. John Hume wanted young people to live for Ireland, to shed their sweat, not their blood.

When journalists would become impatient with hearing these phrases over and over, Hume pointed out that he was a teacher and would continue to repeat the lessons until the students understood. For those who wanted a fuller expression of his thought, there was his book *A New Ireland* (Roberts Rinehart) and virtually every positive document on Northern Ireland produced by the British, Irish, and U.S. governments during the past twenty years bore his imprint. He gave both supporters and opponents a new way of thinking and speaking. As Heaney goes on to say, "He never seemed in a hurry, never spent time scoring points, and always trusted the capacity of his political opponents as well as his constituents to take an extra trusting step."

And so at 10 A.M. on October 16, while on his way to a conference on economic development in Derry, John Hume got the news that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize. Because David Trimble had taken that "extra trusting step" and said "yes" to peace, he would share the prize with Hume. Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams's reaction to the announcement of the prize speaks to his appreciation of Hume's steadiness: "There would be no peace process but for his courage and vision. Despite great personal attacks on his integrity and humanity, John never wavered in his commitment to peace."

As congratulations came from others who had contributed to the peace process—Irish President Mary McAleese, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Bill Clinton, and Senator George Mitchell—their language reflected a lesson learned: reconciliation, healing process, accommodation of difference, the coexistence of both traditions. These were the phrases they used, and they were Hume's.

For Hume himself, the prize was for the people of Northern Ireland. "I see it not as an award to myself but as a very powerful international approval of the peace process." He also mentioned Derry. "Given my city and what my city has suffered throughout all of these years, and indeed before these years, I believe it is a great statement in support of Derry as well."

Yes, and Derry celebrated, glowing at the pictures of John and Pat Hume on every front page, and happy that Pat had spoken to the television reporters, something she usually prefers not to do. She talked of how John had continued on through the difficult times of the mid-1990s. This was when Hume's efforts to bring about an IRA cease-fire through talks with Gerry Adams were misunderstood and attacked. But to quote Heaney again, John Hume "stood his ground with integrity." Later Hume said that if talking to one man could save even one life, he had to try—the cease-fire and the Good Friday agreement were the rewards of his efforts. Perhaps only Pat Hume really knew what reservoir of inner strength he had called on to stay the course.

Hume was obviously enjoying himself as he went from Derry that morning and gave a previously scheduled address to school girls in Belfast. Perfect— teaching again! At Mass that Sunday, Pat and John Hume heard Paul's letter to Timothy: "Stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient—correcting, reproving, appealing—constantly teaching and never losing patience." It's an instruction John Hume has always followed. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARE THE BISHOPS' PASTORAL LETTERS PASSÉ?

A process we can't afford to lose

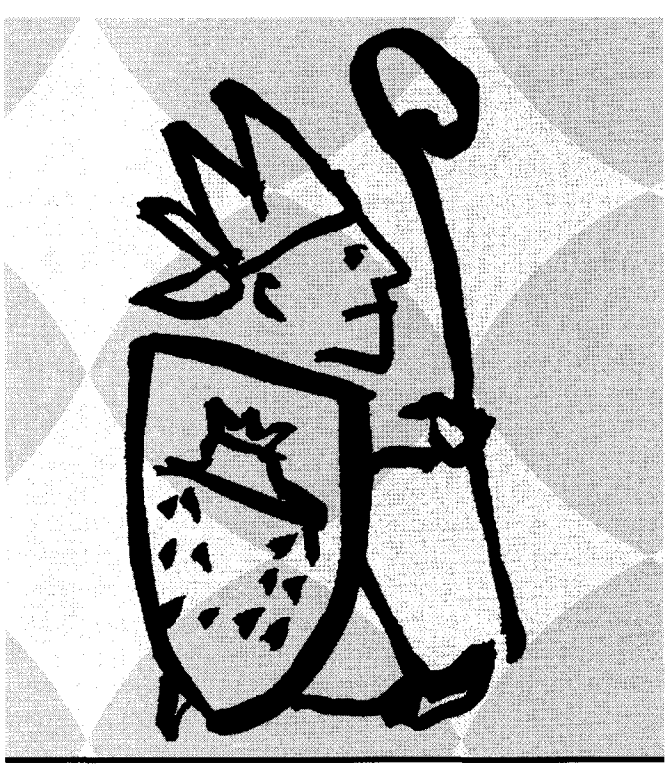
Bruce Martin Russett

Major institutional statements of Catholic teaching on the moral dimensions of political and social issues have taken one of three forms. Two are papal encyclicals and documents from councils, notably Vatican II. Pastoral letters of national conferences of bishops are the third form. These have sometimes developed into big statements, drawing attention beyond the Catholic community and sometimes beyond national borders. The pastoral letter is an art form perhaps developed most highly in the United States. It is also a phenomenon, and a process, which is currently under heavy stress, with a clouded future. We risk a great loss.

To understand what is at stake we must begin with the experience of producing the 1983 pastoral letter by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Notre Dame's Father Theodore Hesburgh called it "the finest document ever to emerge from the U.S. hierarchy." One may agree, or disagree. It certainly was the most prominent, probably more than any other pastoral letter in any country. I was involved as principal consultant. Both the substance of the document and the process that produced it are worth recalling.

The Challenge of Peace was both *universal* and *American* in substance. It was reflective of the universal church, in that it built on two millennia of Christian and especially Catholic tradition: Scripture, church scholars like Augustine and Aquinas, papal and conciliar documents, including statements of John XXIII, John Paul II, and the Second Vatican Council, and recent writings by many analysts. It drew especially on the just-war tradition which strictly limits the legitimate reasons for going to war, and the kinds of actions that can licitly be taken during war. But it paid much respect to the principles of nonviolence that would lead to acts of conscientious objection; it repeated Vatican II's affirmation, in *The Church in the Modern World*, of conscientious objection as a legitimate option for individuals. This, incidentally, is a very American option, though not exclusively so. Many governments do not permit it.

The letter applied general principles from the tradition to the particular local conditions of the United States during the cold war. Applying general principles to reasoning about local conditions is precisely what national bishops' conferences are supposed to do. Here, the bishops applied Catholic moral principles to American political and strategic realities, and to the configuration of moral discourse in the United States in the 1980s. The pastoral letter made a careful distinction between general nondisputable principles (like the need to distinguish between civilians—who can never be targeted deliberately—and possibly legitimate military targets, and the need to keep any damage, both to military personnel and to civilians, proportionate to the good supposed to be achieved), and it conditioned judgments about how those principles would seem to apply to specific choices about strategy or weapons. The letter was also very American in encouraging study, prayer, and dialogue rather than laying down binding statements such as "You cannot licitly work in a nuclear weapons factory." Although it applied very tight conditions to the continued possession and possible use of nuclear weapons, it did not absolutely forbid ei-



Bruce Martin Russett *is Dean Acheson Professor of International Relations and Political Science at Yale University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ther. Partly this was of course a practical judgment about the character of national as well as international politics. But it also reflected a particularly American commitment to freedom of conscience: the principle that moral teaching must be persuasive, not coercive. Indeed, one bishop member said at a meeting of the drafting committee, "*Humanae vitae*, issued by the pope after rejecting the recommendations of his own commission, destroyed all teaching authority on the topic. We mustn't let that happen here."

It was also a very American document in its process, which began with requests for such a letter from a wide spectrum of bishops, and a resolution of the bishops' conference to move forward. The letter was produced after uniquely wide consultation covering the full political spectrum, government officials and private experts on military-political matters, ethicists, theologians, and citizens. This consultation was also very ecumenical, ranging far beyond just Catholics. The committee was actively and publicly lobbied from all sides. In addition to incorporating statements from Catholic tradition and authorities, it cited Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, and many other individuals. The drafting committee followed a collegial process; clerics and nonclerics on the staff (including a sister) were treated as intellectual and moral equals by the bishops. But the bishop members would be the ones who signed it, so in that sense we quite properly could not be fully equal. The bishop members took their responsibility incredibly seriously. Those who had little expertise on the issues rapidly acquired it.

So too, in time, did most of the bishops in the country. They had to do so because the process was so public, and the document itself was so controversial. It went through three drafts, plus what became a televised extravaganza of the 1983 annual bishops' meeting in Chicago, to produce the final letter. The drafts responded carefully to the various comments; they moved repeatedly—but within sharp limits—between conservative and dovish positions. People made sure they understood what they were doing. (Perhaps with some help; at one crucial point in the great meeting at the Chicago Hilton, I thought I felt the Holy Spirit move across that ballroom.) And in the end it was approved by a vote of 238 to 9. It was, I believe, a testament to pluralism, and to the understanding of democracy embodied in John Courtney Murray's contributions to *The Church in the Modern World*. It was achieved through a process by which all subsequent bishops' statements would be judged, and which I thought at the time might prove even more important than the document itself.

There were some glitches. I'll report one briefly. The Vatican took little official notice of the enterprise until it had been under way for over two years. Then, in January 1983, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin (chair of the committee) and Archbishop John Roach (the elected head of the conference) were summoned to Rome for consultations. Rome had waited a long time to come into a process that had proceeded effectively

The School of Theology-Seminary Saint John's University

The School of Theology-Seminary, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, a Benedictine institution, seeks a dean for a master's-level program of theological research and spiritual and professional development.

Saint John's Abbey and University have been involved since 1857 in training priests. This commitment now includes preparing men and women for collaborative pastoral ministry in the church. Further information available at **www.csbsju.edu.**

The dean, who holds a faculty appointment, is chief administrative officer of the School of Theology. The position begins July 1, 1999 and requires a doctoral degree in a theological or cognate discipline with significant experience in teaching and departmental or university administration. The successful candidate will be an active member in a Roman Catholic worshiping community and familiar with Benedictine values; demonstrate a commitment to theological education in a university setting; express strong leadership within an environment that values collegiality; work with an active Board of Overseers; be a representative of the school to bishops and other constituencies; and maintain contacts in the theological academy.

Send confidential applications with a detailed letter, CV, names and telephone numbers of three references to Director of Human Resources, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN 56321. Application deadline: December 20, 1998. EOE/AA.

A Gathering of Different Lights

Let your light shine through the graduate degree programs at the School of Theology and Ministry's Institute for Catholic Theological Studies and the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies.

Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies
Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality
Master of Divinity

Seattle University
FOUNDED 1891

For more information, contact:
School of Theology and Ministry
900 Broadway, Seattle, WA 98122-4340
(206) 296-5330
E-mail: stm@seattleu.edu
www.seattleu.edu/theomin/

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lordsburg, New Mexico

Having come this far from the mountain,
we see more easily the mountain
as a man, lying on his back, face to the sun
and stars, his thoughts and dreams
the clouds passing over in light and shade.

Or so Apache legend has it, Cochise's body
never found, reabsorbed by the landscape.
In this expanse of mountain and desert,
soldiers hunted him for eleven years, believing
his death meant a world they could possess.

A few migrant clouds scud above Rt. 10.
Below, this overgrown truck stop's tableau
of low cement buildings, sun-leached
and troweled with sand, where we stop
to eat. Cook, waitress, owner—she tells us

a lot of things have happened here.
As she talks, she checks the seals around
the doors and windows where a fringe of sand
has blown in. A tractor-trailer drags the day's
hot breath through town, a cross of roads

named Motel Drive North, Motel Drive West.
As we eat, she loses herself to a soap opera
rerun flickering overhead, a radio on behind
the counter giving Bush's latest thoughts
on a war being fought in the sand.

Robert Cording

without it. The Americans met with the major Vatican officials and the pope. They were presented with a variety of questions and reservations, but none that the Americans felt were fundamental. On returning, Bernardin and Roach wrote a memo for the committee saying what points in the document needed clarification or modification, but we all thought the modifications did not threaten the integrity of the document, or the process. Bernardin said orally that the Vatican feared that conscientious objection, and hence nonviolence, would be treated as an option for the state (not just for individuals), but that he knew the committee did not intend that and could make it clear. We all sensed also an undertone of displeasure at the degree to which the American bishops were taking on a teaching function that Vatican officials would have preferred to keep in Rome.

Then, in March, came a rather imperious memorandum from Monsignor Jean Schotte, secretary of the Vatican Justice and Peace Commission, detailing a long list of reservations allegedly discussed at the Rome meeting. The substance of the memo was not so bad, expressing many opinions but not as a magisterial statement. But, said Bernardin, "its tone is more negative than I experienced in Rome," and if it should become public "sentences could be taken out of context and used mischievously." That would destroy all our efforts to write a document that would both include specifics and achieve a consensus—end of project. And Schotte indicated that in due time the Vatican would send the memo to every American bishop—meaning, of course, that it would become public.

The committee members were dismayed, and furious. Blessed Joseph Bernardin (I use the qualifier deliberately; I believe he was, and is, blessed) said, "In terms of myself, I'd be happy to say 'Go to Hell.' But we can't. We have to preserve the document." And it was Bernardin's brilliant stroke that saved it. He said that he would himself distribute the Schotte memo to all the bishops, the Bernardin and Roach report to us on the Rome meeting, and a committee commentary on the Schotte memo, showing that we were in fundamental agreement with its principles. He did so, and the storm blew away. But it came close to a total wipeout of the process and of the document.

So what is the contemporary relevance of this narrative? I believe it raises two questions.

First, does the substance of the document itself have any relevance for contemporary international relations, after the cold war? Here are a few highlights. The letter did not call for unilateral disarmament, nor did it explicitly prohibit any use of nuclear weapons for deterrence. But it drew on *The Church in the Modern World*'s statement that, "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man itself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation." In light of the probable escalation of any use of nuclear weapons to undiscriminating and utterly disproportionate consequences, the U.S. bishops declared, "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified. Nonnuclear attacks by another state must be resisted by other than nuclear means." They also leaned heavily on a very careful statement by John Paul II in 1982: "*In current conditions*, 'deterrence' [actually, in the French original, "*une dissuasion*," not any and all deterrence] *based on balance*, certainly *not as an end in itself* but as a *step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still* be judged morally acceptable." Note all the qualifiers, which I emphasize with italics.

In a subsequent pastoral letter in 1993, *The Harvest of Jus-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tice is Sown in Peace, the U.S. bishops declared, "The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal." Now, well into the post-cold war era, when the threat of an attack on the West by the Soviet Union is lifted but weaker states are imitating the nuclear powers by developing nuclear weapons of their own, is it time to think again about demanding the negotiated elimination of all such weapons? Perhaps that is still utopian. But by the bishops' own reasoning, they should as a body be exploring it. And they aren't.

No national conference pastoral letter that really says anything can expect to achieve unanimity. If both individual bishops and national conferences are tranquilized, who then is left?

Which leads to the second question: Is there likely ever again to be anything like the U.S. bishops' "big letter"? It would take a lot of bishops who were ready to address the question, and to exercise some real independence in doing so. Yet the temperamental and theological makeup of the hierarchy in the United States has changed greatly. In 1985 (note, only two years after *The Challenge of Peace*), the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops asked for a study of the theological and juridical status of national episcopal conferences. That study worked its way through the Vatican and emerged as the July 1998 apostolic letter from Rome on "The Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences." That document declares that national conferences are not to take over the authority of the individual bishop in his diocese, since his authority is by "divine institution." Yet in general, individual bishops are becoming increasingly reluctant to exercise much independence from anyone; perhaps some even are selected with the expectation they will not; and they risk penalties when they do. Furthermore, doctrinal declarations of a national conference not unanimously agreed to may henceforth be issued only if the Vatican gives its approval. One dissenting bishop is enough to stop it. This is, of course, a much higher standard than was applied to documents from the Second Vatican Council. (And remember that *The Challenge of Peace* garnered "only" 96 percent of the vote.) No national conference pastoral letter that really says anything can expect to achieve unanimity. If both individual bishops and national conferences are tranquilized, who then is left? We need the Holy Spirit. □

DON'T BLAME THE BARTENDER

Tonight Was a Long Time Coming

Could this priest be heading for his car? Clearly, he's been drinking and he'd be putting in harm's way not only himself, but every occupant of every car on the road he drives.

If he intends to walk, he might meet members of his congregation along the way. Will they feel shock or disappointment? More likely, what they'll feel is a sudden sense of abandonment.

Who's to blame? Alcoholism is a disease. The victim seldom is able to shake its tenacious grasp without a helping hand. Think about it. Didn't you notice, or at least suspect, ***before*** tonight, that Father had a chemical dependency problem? What steps have you taken?

One Out of Ten

Chemical dependency is a problem so widespread that at least ten percent of the Catholic clergy is afflicted. The popular impression is that men who are not treated are left to suffer alone. That's not true. Members of their dioceses fall victims, too.

If this priest decides tonight to drive and has a serious accident, it could cost his diocese tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and lawsuits – programs will have to be eliminated, parish improvements canceled, needy people deprived.

Shame shared.

Time and time again, the court says, "They're your employees. You're responsible." ***If they get in an accident, the diocese is going to pay.***

You Need to Act Now

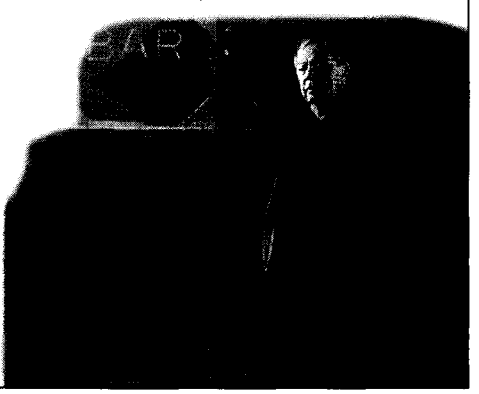
We're only following our Faith in giving troubled clergy the "hand up" they require to continue their work with success and sobriety. They need us. More importantly, we need them.

Denial by the priest or deacon is generally part of the problem, so contact us at Guest House for help on how to proceed. Call now. We are able to provide a complete spiritual, psychological and medical evaluation at no charge.

GuestHouse

Ph: 1-800-634-4155

4800 48th Street N.E.
Rochester, Minnesota 55903



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Alleva

MISTRANSLATED

'Beloved'

To judge the film *Beloved* as a self-sufficient work of art is impossible. Even someone who hasn't read the Toni Morrison novel may sense that what's on screen is misshaped, that important narrative material has been dropped or sloppily conveyed, that colorful details have been blown out of proportion. One somehow hears the fingers of beleaguered scriptwriters shuffling through hundreds of Pulitzer-prize winning pages, and the squeak of magic markers yellowing vital passages and crossing out others not so vital and then writing "stet!" over the latter when it's decided that they are vital after all. One hears the voice of Oprah (hoarse from script conferences carried on into the wee hours of morning) pleading that a scene not be cut because, dammit! I was inspired to do this movie when I read *that very scene*! And one hears other equally hoarse but smaller voices warning that, if we do include that passage then we have to keep the following one, too, because both sections depend on each other, but we're looking at a script that's an hour too long already and. . . so forth. I'm not echoing show-biz gossip. This movie exudes desperation.

The Morrison story is a genre-stretching work. Perhaps influenced by the "magic realism" of South American writers, the novelist uses gothic horror as an inroad to the abiding horrors of slavery. On the outskirts of Cincinnati in the 1870s, the house of an ex-slave, Sethe (Winfrey), is being haunted. The spirit behaves like an angry poltergeist, drives Sethe's sons away but forms a truce with her daughter, Denver, who then withdraws from the world. When an old friend, Paul D. , becomes Sethe's live-in lover and faces down the poltergeist, the spirit incarnates itself as a lovely but seemingly retarded adolescent girl who calls herself Beloved and takes over the household by befriending Denver and seducing Paul D. Eventually it's revealed that Beloved is the daughter Sethe killed almost twenty years before in order to preserve her from the horrors of slavery when an old master came to reclaim his runaway slaves.

Many themes are here, explored perhaps in depth in the novel, but only skimmed on screen. To list a few: the scars of slavery unhealed by freedom; sex used as a weapon (first by slave owners on slaves, then by Beloved as a take-over bid); the religiosity of American blacks, feeding off Southern Protestantism but taking on a unique life of its own; the "thick love" (Sethe's phrase) of a mother who so desperately wants to protect her children from a brutal world that she turns herself into a Medea. And isn't it a boon to the filmmakers that Morrison explores these themes within the framework of a ghost story, for haven't the movies always thrived on the horror and allure of the supernatural?

A boon, perhaps, but also a trap that the director Jonathan Demme and his collaborators walked right into. Toni Morrison deployed and controlled the ghostly elements of her story with her powerful and flexible prose style. Her language says boo!, then her language calms us down. We see ghosts only when her words allow us to and, even then, only within the context of normal human activity.

But horror on screen is both more immediately shocking and more combustible than literary spookiness. When director Jack Clayton made *The Innocents*, his adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw*, he measured his shocks out in small doses so we wouldn't miss the struggle going on within his heroine. But Demme slathers on his effects. The very first scene of the poltergeist's attack, with a dog slammed so hard against a wall that its eye pops out, is straight from *Exorcist* territory, and so are the early appearances of Beloved, skin acrawl with insects, speaking at first in a *basso profundo*, later in babyish prattle. The lighting effects recall science fiction thrillers like *The Fly* or *Stargate*, and they come on so strong and so soon that they put us in the wrong frame of mind for the subtle

The Paraclete Book Center

146 East 74th Street, New York, New York 10021

More than 45 years of service to our customers throughout the world.
A wide variety of thoughtfully selected titles, including:

THE LIFE OF THOMAS MORE — Ackroyd
THE WORD EMBODIED — Kavanaugh SABBATICAL JOURNEY — Nouwen
ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, AND EPIPHANY — McKenna

Prompt, careful attention to your phone and gift orders.
Special orders welcome. Gift certificates available. We ship worldwide.
Visa & MasterCard accepted.

Hours: Tuesday – Friday: 10–6; Saturday: 10–5

Call us toll-free: 888/311-8949 • **Phone:** 212/535-4050
• **Fax:** 212/535-4052 • **E-mail:** para@cybernex.net

www: http://www2.cybernex.net/~para/public/

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

human relationships that follow.

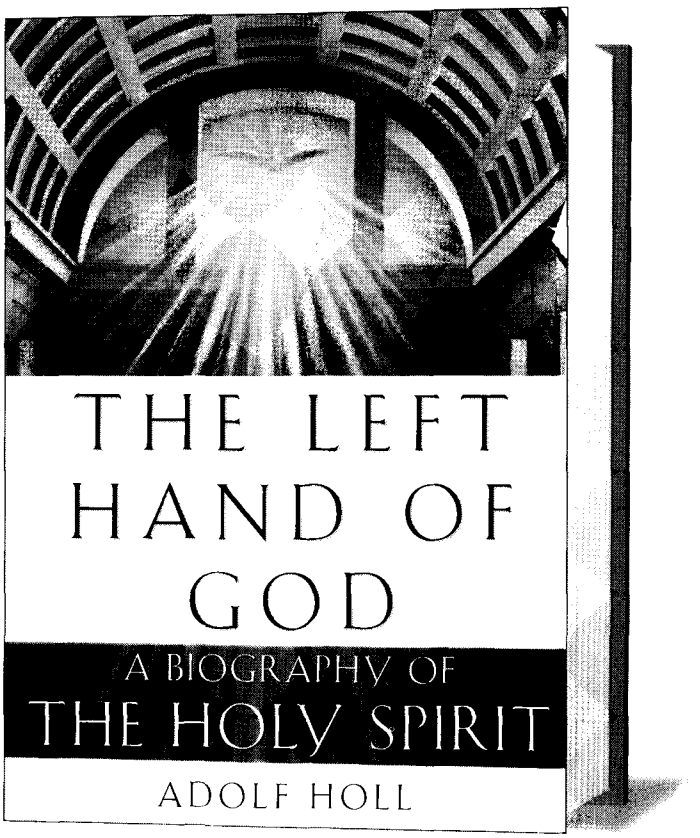
Perhaps we could adjust ourselves to slower, more meditative rhythms if the script weren't so smudgy. Much of the talk between Sethe and Paul D. is about their past, yet not much of it is drawn with vividness or even clarity, except the physical brutalities of whipping and lynching. For instance, what was Sethe's husband like? What were the relations between him and Sethe? between him and Paul D.? Was Paul D. in love with Sethe decades ago? Why was the slave owner called "Schoolteacher"? Why couldn't Sethe and her husband reunite after slavery was abolished? The answers may be on the page, but they're not up there on the screen or on the soundtrack.

Or maybe they are on the latter but I just couldn't hear them. The intimate moments are muffled by underplaying less subtle than enervated. Oprah Winfrey proved her talent a decade ago with her excellent work in *The Color Purple*, but as Sethe she's surprisingly dim. Morrison has created an ambivalent figure, loving but smothering, righteous but guilt-stricken. No matter how good Sethe is, a glint of the demoniac must be seen in her eyes, for, as Denver later points out, Beloved may be not just a ghost but a manifestation of part of Sethe's psyche. Winfrey's relative blandness doesn't capture this.

Physically and temperamentally, Danny Glover is perfectly cast as Paul D. because no one portrays sane men of middle sensuality better than this actor. (His solidity is the only thing that has kept the *Lethal Weapon* series from turning completely loony.) But Glover has a tendency toward clotted speech and, trying to harmonize with Winfrey's low-level intensity, he often becomes inaudible. Did the director, aware of the wildness of the supernatural scenes, want to make the intimate ones as hushed as possible for the sake of contrast and relief? If so, his solution backfired.

Thandie Newton, as Beloved, achieves the grotesquery of her role but never its pathos. Kimberly Elise is at first hampered by the monotony of playing a girl who so completely withholds herself, but when Denver emerges from her

Early praise for Adolf Holl's groundbreaking biography of the Holy Spirit



"A masterpiece of scholarship, history, readability, and a vocabulary for holiness."—Rev. Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

"An urbane, sardonic travelogue of the Holy Spirit's manifestations through history. Writing in a punchy yet lyrical style, the author is no pedantic guide, but rather a raconteur...**There will be no other book about the Holy Spirit quite like it.**"—Walter Wink, Professor of Biblical Interpretation, Auburn Theological Seminary

"The concept is ingenious, the writing lucid, and the story unfolds like a saga. For years the Third Person of the Christian Trinity has either been neglected or just demoted to second-class status. This book almost makes up for all that."—Harvey Cox, Thomas Professor of Divinity, Harvard University Divinity School

Doubleday Available wherever books are sold
A Selection of the Book-of-the-Month and One Spirit Book Clubs
Visit our Web site at www.doubleday.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emotional chrysalis, Elise projects candor and the discovery of inner strength beautifully. Best of all is the great veteran actress Beau Richards as a village elder who nurtures the spirits of the newly self-liberated slaves. Her exhortation to them to express their joy doesn't need verbal richness because Richards so poignantly reaches for the words she needs that the ache for eloquence is moving enough.

There is also good work by designer Kristi Zia and cinematographer Tak Fujimoto. The re-creation of the Cincinnati of 1873 is a far finer achievement than the pre-Civil War Connecticut in *Amistad* or the turn-of-the-century New York of Milos Foreman's *Ragtime*. Watching those two films, you may have marveled at the meticulousness of the settings, but also sensed the presence of a strike crew just off camera, ready to demolish everything once the shooting stopped. But Zia's Cincinnati projects the hum and bustle of a real, growing city where life will continue long past the final credits. Fujimoto is the least color-infatuated cameraman now working in this country, and most of his work (*Melvin and Howard, The Silence of the Lambs*) dwells in one's memory as black-and-white rather than Technicolor. Here he achieves a sort of brown-bleached-to-yellow look that is perfect for both the realistic and the supernatural scenes.

I must also note that in the final half-hour of this 185-minute movie, Jonathan Demme finally breaks through to the combination of off-beat humor, generosity, and suspense that distinguishes his finest work (*Melvin and Howard, Something Wild*). When a sort of ladies' aid society marches over to Sethe's house to exorcise it, the fine line between ludicrousness and grandeur is deftly negotiated.

But after that, *Beloved* suffers still another lapse. Trying to raise Sethe's spirits after another traumatic loss, Paul D. tells her, "You are your own best thing" and "Love your heart." Is this what you say to a woman who has lost three of her children, killed one of them herself, and been forced into earthly hell by a semi-demonic spirit?

Beloved isn't just a mess. It's a mess made out of mush. □

STAGE

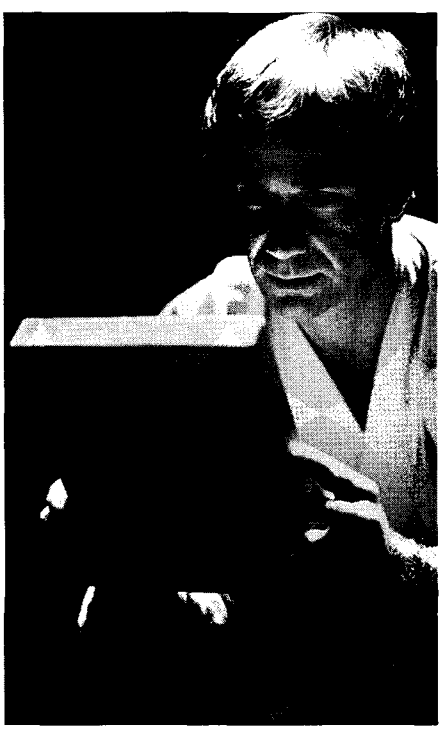
Celia Wren

ENDO'S MISSIONARY

'Silence'

Most people would not associate the quality of silence with the sea. And yet in *Silence*, Steven Dietz's stage adaptation of Shusaku Endo's novel, the sea, with its brutal indifference to human life, begins to signal a kind of silence to a devastated young missionary. Caught in seventeenth-century Japan during the savage persecution of Christians, Father Rodrigues feels his faith wavering when no miracles answer human pain. When the faithful are suffering for God's sake, Rodrigues begins to wonder, why does God refuse to grant them, if not help, then at least a sign of his presence?

The Theater Company Subaru production of *Silence*, which traveled to several American cities in October, was an agonizing study of belief and the limits of human certainty. Though dramatically stiff and rhythmically choppy, the play, which was performed by Japanese and American actors (and co-directed by Joseph Hanreddy and Ganshi Murata) delivered confrontations so profound and immediate that aesthetics seemed to fade into the background.



The play's trajectory is launched from an apostasy, as the assured young Jesuit Rodrigues (Lee E. Ernst) hears that his former teacher has renounced Christianity while working as a missionary in Japan. The rumor, and the reports of the cruel oppression of Japanese Christians, only strengthen Rodrigues's eagerness for his own mission to the country. Arriving in the coastal region near Nagasaki, Rodrigues and his partner, Garrpe (Torrey Hanson), find that the authorities are rooting out surreptitious Christianity by forcing local villagers to trample upon plaques of Christ and the Virgin. Those who refuse are killed or imprisoned. (By such means military authorities more or less eliminated Japanese Christianity during the seventeenth-century's first sixty years.)

When they are captured, the two priests confront the same test, the price of their refusal being the torture and murder of the converts they have ministered to. As the Grand Inquisitor-like interpreter (Yukihiro Yoshida in the Subaru production) batters Rodrigues with relentless temptation and argument, the Jesuit's confidence crumbles. Perhaps his own zeal, his fervent endorsement of martyrdom, are forms of hardheartedness? Perhaps the campaign to spread Christianity across the world is nothing more than arrogant cultural imperialism? The play's harrowing conclusion shows Rodrigues and his colleague answering these questions in opposite ways.

In scenes that bounce thematically off the gospel story, and that frequently pose scenes of death against the backdrop of the sea, *Silence* wrestles with the notion of certainty. Why is there evil in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the world, the jaunty interpreter demands during a debate with Rodrigues. "That is the age-old question," the priest observes. "And what is the age-old answer?" his tormentor rejoins, taunting the pious young man with the insufficiency of his philosophy.

By the end of the play, the path of uncertainty, rejection of religious absolutism, willingness to suspect oneself of *hubris*, humility in the face of other cultures and even of events begins to seem preferable to unswerving conviction, no matter how theologically orthodox. Like Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, with which it shares many themes, *Silence* explores the idea that flawed human beings can still be ministers of grace. "Our Lord, too, entrusted himself to the most untrustworthy of men," one priest points out. As the story unfolds, doubt becomes another aspect of human frailty, perhaps the most important aspect.

The concept of uncertainty, which colors Dietz's script, also shaded the performances in the Subaru staging. Act 1's early scenes in Portugal and the Jesuits' Chinese outpost were stilted and stagy, and Ernst's delivery was flat. It was when Rodrigues first experienced doubt, standing alone in an abandoned village just before his capture, that the production really took off. "Why this silence? How can God witness the persecution of Christians and do nothing?" Crying these lines, Ernst's voice quavered, became full of emotion, changed in resonance from sentence to sentence. The play broke free from history to involve and, what is more to its credit, disturb a modern audience.

Even the scenic design seemed to allude to the instability of human knowledge. Designer Kent Dorsey created a look for the piece relying almost entirely on lights thrown on and through a translucent screen. Missionaries, persecutors, and the faithful played out the main drama on the nearly bare forestage, but the images that guided and haunted them—priests celebrating Mass back in Portugal, a Japanese magistrate on a thronelike seat, Japanese converts crucified on a beach—appeared through the scrim, so that they seemed to exist in a separate reality. This visual device hinted that belief follows in the wake of powerful images, and that as new images appear, belief can change.

At the same time, the production's shifting images did not seem entirely the province of mysticism. An effect like the pure light-and-color segue between a circular stained glass window and the Japanese Rising Sun, both projected on the scrim, reminded the audience that cultural exchange also involves changing images.

In an author's note included in the program, Dietz recalled that, on meeting the eminent Catholic author whose novel he wanted to adapt, he wondered, "Why would this man entrust his masterpiece to me?" The American playwright concluded, "I think that Mr. Endo knew that by encountering Japan through the historical prism of his novel, I would be forced to become, in a sense, a missionary. I would be required, over time, to abandon my prejudices (both cultural and theatrical) in the service of something unknown to me."

While reminding us how painful it can be to reach away from certainty toward the unknown, Dietz's play suggests that the process can lead to revelation. In the words of the philosopher Francis Bacon, who had barely been dead a decade by 1637, when the action of *Silence* takes place: "If a man will begin with certainties, he will end with doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties." □

FACULTY for PASTORAL MINISTRIES PROGRAM

The Institute in Pastoral Ministries invites resumes from persons who are dedicated to educating veteran Catholic lay ministers. Doctorate, knowledge of Roman Catholicism, and excellence in either teaching or pastoral practice are preferred. Courses include Human Relations, Leadership, Pastoral Planning, Christian Spiritualities, Prayer, Foundations in Theology, Ecclesiology, Scripture, Liturgy, Sacraments, Morality. IPM enrolls students from more than two dozen states and Canadian provinces who seek an M.A. or Certificate in Pastoral Ministries. Courses occur in a non-traditional format, beginning after Easter and concluding before Advent. Faculty are on campus for the two-week midsummer residency beginning in late June.

Send a letter of interest and resume to: Dr. Gregory Sobolewski, IPM Resumes, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 700 Terrace Heights #3, Winona MN 55987-1399 or fax 507-457-1722. You will receive a detailed description of the Institute for further review and, about January 1, a posting of open positions for 1999. http://www.smumn.edu/academics. AA/EOE.

30th anniversary year

WASHINGTON THEOLOGICAL UNION

1998 Distinguished Service Award honoring Rev. Raymond S. Brown, SS

1928-1998

Washington Theological Union presents the 1998 Distinguished Service Award posthumously to ***REV. RAYMOND E. BROWN, SS.*** *The award is given annually to recognize outstanding achievement in the area of theological scholarship or pastoral ministry.*

The Union honors Father Brown as an outstanding Catholic biblical scholar, both nationally and internationally. He taught that knowledge of the Word unlocks the experience of faith and leads to vital ministry.

A special tribute "Raymond Brown: His Life in the Church and His Contribution to Biblical Scholarship" was given by Rev. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ, at the Union's annual Founders Day Convocation on October 29, 1998.

Washington Theological Union
6896 Laurel Street, NW
Washington, DC 20012
202-726-8800

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

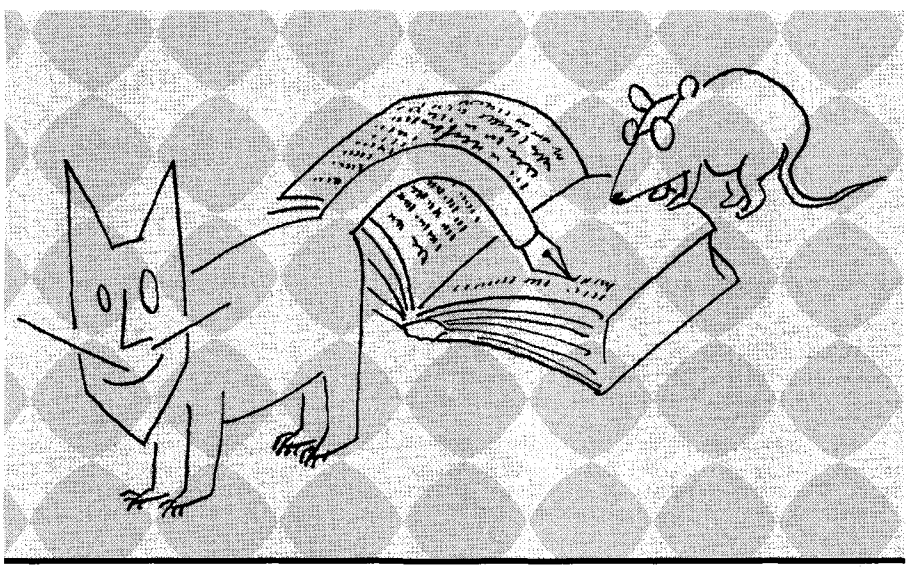
Geniuses at Work

Daria Donnelly

A renaissance is under way in children's literature, and alongside the ephemera, an astonishing number of true and beautiful books for young people now can be found on library and bookstore shelves. The strongest confirmation that we are living in a moment hospitable to serious artistry came this spring when the long-silent giant, Tomi Ungerer, began to make books for children again. Forthwith follows my view of the best of the latest, and some reflections on the picture book prompted by Ungerer's exhilarating return.

The most lyrical and perfectly crafted picture book of 1998 is *Snow* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, $16) by Uri Shulevitz, the story of a boy who rightly believes that it will snow, despite the predictions of radio, television, and proximate adults that it will not. Every element of the book is right: the typography is beautiful, the language is economical and witty, the pacing impeccable, and the pictures set in marvelous colloquy with the words (on the page, "but as soon as one snowflake melts another takes its place," a subtle watercolor mark suggests a snowflake has melted straight into the paper). When above the words "floating floating through the air," which seemingly refer to snow, the statues of Mother Goose, her gander, and Humpty Dumpty (!) make their graceful gravity-defying descent from a bookstore façade to join the boy and his dog on the facing page, you know you are in the presence of the purely magical thing that only picture books can do.

Snow also testifies to the lost worlds that picture books remember: worlds of childhood that have gone under not only to time but more violent forces. Author Shulevitz, born in Warsaw in 1935, is a child of war. The gentle exchanges of courtesy and suspension of gravity in this Eastern European cityscape as it disappears under snow counterpoise the destruction witnessed by four-year-old Shulevitz during the Warsaw blitz, which he recalled for Lee Bennett Hopkins in *Pauses: Autobiographical Reflection of 101 Creators of Children's Books* (the loss of stairs in his apartment building, and his ensuing terror, perhaps the deep source of Humpty Dumpty's magical descent).



The great makers bring everything to the picture book (no repression, just tact) and they also use all the physical elements of the book without apology. They know that the book's primacy as conservator of the past depends upon the fact that its pages can turn either way, forward to unfold the visual and verbal narrative, and backward to be reviewed and lingered over. (The movement of a book is different from that of television, video, and computer, and the best children's books know it!) G. Brian Karas's lovely, *The Windy Day* (Simon and Schuster, $16), uses to great effect the left and right pages as indicators of before and after. A wind blows into a tidy town from the left, inspiring a tidy boy's vision when he turns to face it. Earlier, daydreaming at school, the boy had been gazing in the other direction, right toward a blank window and wall. The wind refreshes and animates the boy's sense of the past, all the bits and pieces he had learned at school swept up into a thrilling drama that moves rightward into a now richly promising future. *The Windy Day* is a delicate and rare portrait of the inner life of a schoolchild.

Far from being irrelevant to modern children, the old stories—myths, folk and fairy tales, Bible stories—seem almost to have written us into being. In her adult collection of fairy tales, *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book* (Pantheon, $15, 242 pp.), British novelist Angela Carter says that folk tales, once the universal entertainment of the poor, are "the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary men and women whose labor created our world." In myths and in the Bible our children discover our most important narrative professions of cosmology, theology, ontology. When I select retellings of these stories, I look for books that are tactful but don't excerpt a vital unpleasantness.

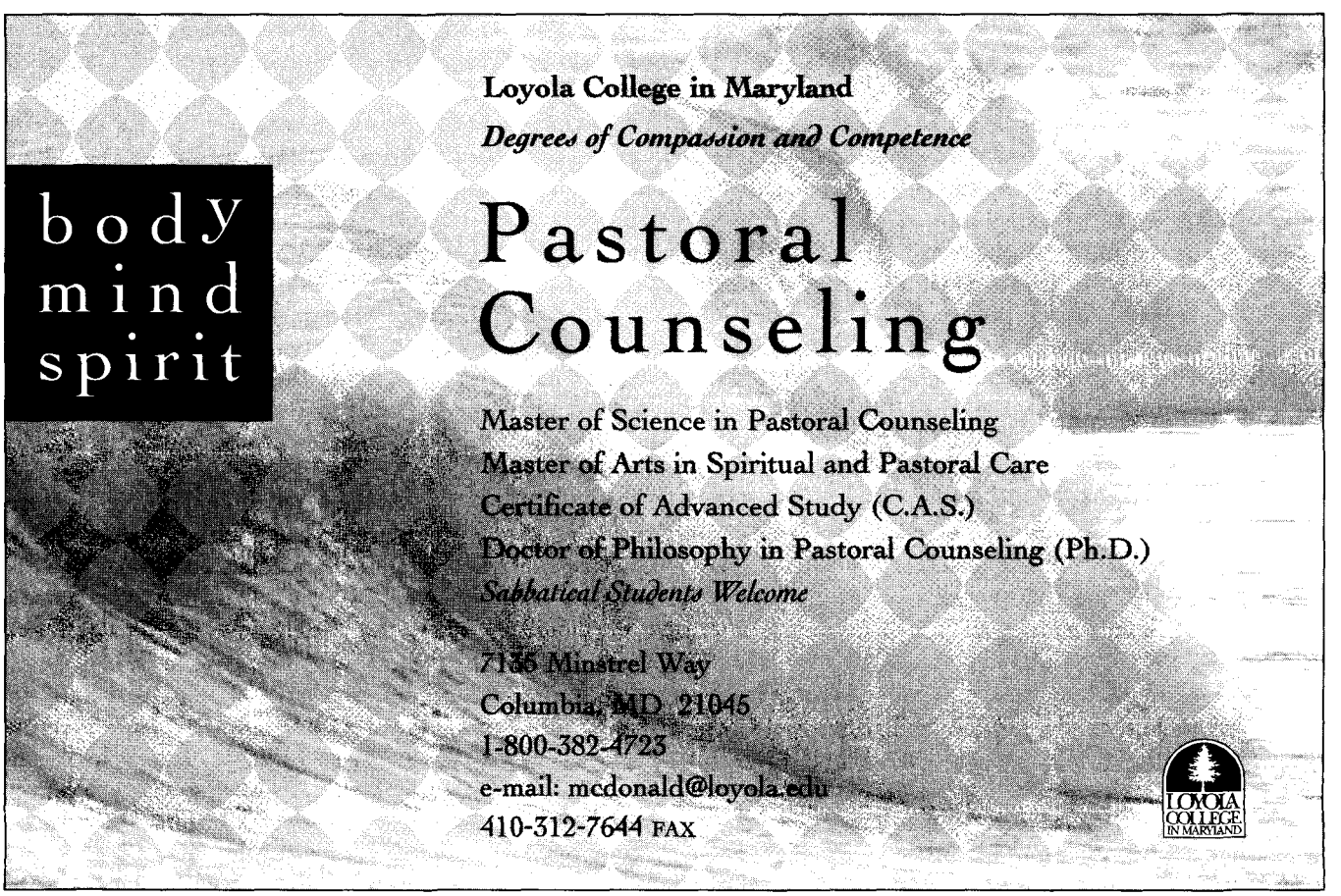
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In presenting the classical myths, no one has yet surpassed Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire's 1962 *Book of Greek Myths* (Doubleday, $24.95, 192 pp.) for visual information, entertaining and graceful storytelling, or for organization. *The Illustrated Book of Fairy Tales* (DK Publishing, $19.95, 160 pp.), retold by Neil Philip and illustrated by Nilesh Mistry, is a fine new international collection of folk and fairy tales. The nine-year-old I read it with ignored the trademark DK information sidebars in favor of the fifty-two pithily told stories themselves.

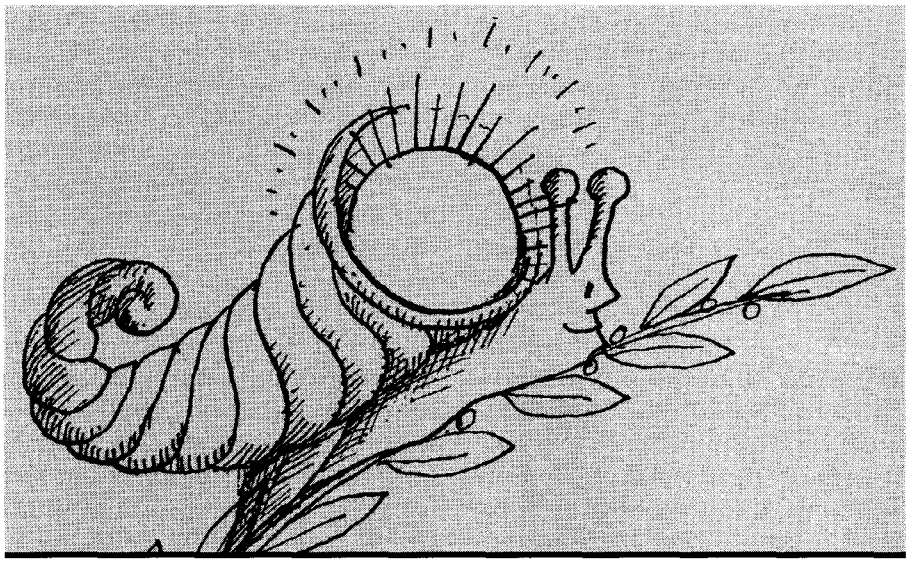
I prefer the leisurely pacing of single-story books and highly recommend the Armenian folk tale, *The Golden Bracelet* (Holiday House, $16.95), retold by David Kherdian and illustrated by Nonny Hogrogian, which embodies the satisfying reversals of folk tales and more rarely, a perfect balance of power between men and women. When a peasant maiden, Anahid, demands that her carefree suitor, Prince Haig, learn a craft before she will consider him, he labors to acquire the skill of weaving, which wins not only her love but later, in a twist on the Philomela myth, his freedom. Kherdian's sinewy retelling is perfectly balanced by veteran artist Hogrogian's incarnation of emotion in the simplest of gestures.

The best Bible retellings, whether they are conceived from a religiously interested position or not, are those which give the powerful strangeness of biblical narrative its due. Lisbeth Zwerger's brilliantly illustrated *Noah's Ark* (adapted by Heinz Janisch, North-South Books, $16.95) is the first picture-book Noah to give as much attention to the destruction of the whole world as to the animals and the rainbow. For the very young, I recommend *First Bible Stories* (Barron's, $14.95 cloth, 96 pp.), Margaret Mayo's vivid retellings of nine Old Testament tales, illustrated by Nicola Smee. This read-aloud collection is the fifth Mayo storybook to have crossed the ocean. Our favorites are *Magical Tales from Many Lands* (Dutton, $19.95, 126 pp.) and *When the World Was Young: Creation and Pourquoi Tales* (Simon and Schuster, $19.95, 75 pp.). Mayo is very good at not only presenting difficult matters like the infanticide, slavery, and race hatred found in Exodus, but also at bringing forward the humor which we so often forget animates stories like Jonah. Artist Nicola Smee, who lets herself go on that one (don't miss the sidelong glance of the child attendant waiting patiently as his king repents atop a heap of ashes), serves Mayo well throughout.

Thanks to Russian artist Mikhail Fiodorov's grave and graceful illustrations, *A Family Treasury of Bible Stories: One for Each Week of the Year* (Harry N. Abrams, $19.95) is the most glorious illustrated Bible in years. Roberto Brunelli's retellings (translated from Italian by Laurence Jenkins) from the Douai version are elegant and spare, their authority visually reinforced by triple-column printing. Fiodorov's extraordinarily well-composed and fluid illustrations, inspired by both quattrocento painting and Russian iconography, spread across the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



full pages in diptych and triptych arrangement. Our resident four-year-old cannot get enough of this beautifully designed book. Prompted by its weekly arrangement, I wonder whether a publisher might persuade Fiodorov to make a big illustrated Sunday Missal for children, the most urgently needed of catechetical books.

Eric Kimmel's *Be Not Far from Me*, illustrated by David Diaz (Simon and Schuster, $25, 256 pp.), is a fabulous Midrash-enhanced collection of stories from the Hebrew Bible. Midrash is a Hebrew term which refers to specific, often narrative, exegetical practices that resulted in a variety of noncanonical retellings and rabbinic commentaries. As Professor James Kugel explains in *The Bible As It Was* (Harvard University Press), this mode of interpretation, also influential in the composition of the Talmud in the fifth and sixth centuries, shares four assumptions about the Bible: that it is cryptic, relevant, perfect and harmonious, and divinely inspired. In Midrashic literature, rabbis told stories that brought forward a living message from the Bible by filling in its narrative gaps and reconciling its contradictions. (This style of interpretation is a perfect match for the inquisitive young, who also want to know why God chose Abraham, how the latter felt about being asked to sacrifice his son, whether Isaac recovered, and what about Sarah). Drawing on Midrash and the Bible, Kimmel tells the story of twenty heroes and heroines beginning with Abraham and ending with the prophet Daniel. *Be Not Far from Me* is as thoughtfully conceived as the d'Aulaires *Greek Myths*, with maps, chronology, excellent storytelling, and, in keeping with Jewish prohibitions against images, silhouette portraits of the heroes, made by the talented David Diaz.

If 1998 is remembered as an *annus mirabilis* in children's literature, it will be because Tomi Ungerer has broken more than two decades of picture-book silence with *Flix* (TomiCo with Roberts Rinehart, $16.95) and a new imprint (TomiCo) which promises to publish his amazing *oeuvre* (this year, the 1962 *The Three Robbers*, 1966 *Moon Man*, and 1973 *No Kiss for Mother*). His return has been met with jubilation (the Danish Hans Christian Andersen Medal among other awards) and occasions here some reflections on the history and nature of the picture book.

Before his long silence, Ungerer, now sixty-seven years old, made twenty-two picture books (and served as illustrator for many more), all but a handful with Ursula Nordstrom, legendary director of Harper's Department of Books for Boys and Girls, whose recently published letters, *Dear Genius* (ed. Leonard Marcus, HarperCollins, $22.95, 406 pp.), are must reading for all interested in the genre's golden age. From 1940 to 1973, Nordstrom gathered and nurtured superlative writers and artists committed to making first-rate picture books for children, among them Ungerer, Maurice Sendak, Margaret Wise Brown, Arnold Lobel, Crockett Johnson, Ruth Krauss, Russell Hoban, Garth Williams, and Marc Simont.

Sendak was Nordstrom's "genius" because he was (and continues to be) a brilliant artist and experimenter, dedicated to crafting picture books that "create an inner life that draws breath from the artist's deepest perception," and a superbly knowledgeable guide to the history and workings of the form (his collected prose essays, *Caldecott & Company* [Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $8.95, 216 pp.] are indispensable). Margaret Wise Brown, steeped in Gertrude Stein, brought the modernist aesthetic to children, while Ruth Krauss, a trained anthropologist, obeyed Ezra Pound's injunction to "make it new" by recording and presenting children's language, their definitions and narratives, without condescension. Arnold Lobel, in the linguistic confines of Nordstrom's "I Can Read Books," created *Frog and Toad*, the most important set of stories about friendship since Kenneth Grahame's sublime *The Wind in the Willows*. Comic-strip veteran Crockett Johnson confirmed the likeness between picture books and the funnies, an art form which began shortly after Randolph Caldecott's contrapuntal illustrations of Mother Goose (1878) inaugurated the picture book genre, and which also lives by the interaction of text and pictures, and the movement both within and between pages, or frames. (Ludwig Bemelmans, Jean de Brunhoff, William Steig, and Dr. Seuss were also cartoonists.) Ungerer brought philosophy to the genre, an edgy combination of macabre humor and detached ontological musing that can be credited to his harrowing coming of age on the front lines of wartime Alsace.

This was a stellar group, morally and aesthetically ambitious, supported by a publisher willing to explain to dissatisfied readers why they should trust a visionary artist who discomfits them. (Nordstrom's letters defending the sexism in Ungerer's *No Kiss for Mother* and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nudity in Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* should be required reading for editors working in today's more consolidated and anxious-to-please industry, as Nordstrom's authoritative sense of the difference between liberty and license, evident in her exchanges with writers and illustrators, might fortify and encourage them.) Because they were serious artists, these picture-book makers were natural allies with children no matter how unsettling their work, because they too were explorers and interpreters. (Think how many great picture books, from Edward Ardizzone's *Brave Tim* books to Margaret Wise Brown's *Little Fur Family*, Ezra Jack Keats's, *The Snowy Day*, Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and Barbara Cooney's *Miss Rumphius* are about leaving the known, mastering the unfamiliar, discovering limits, returning home gratefully and changed, a plot that charts not only children's development but the creative process itself.)

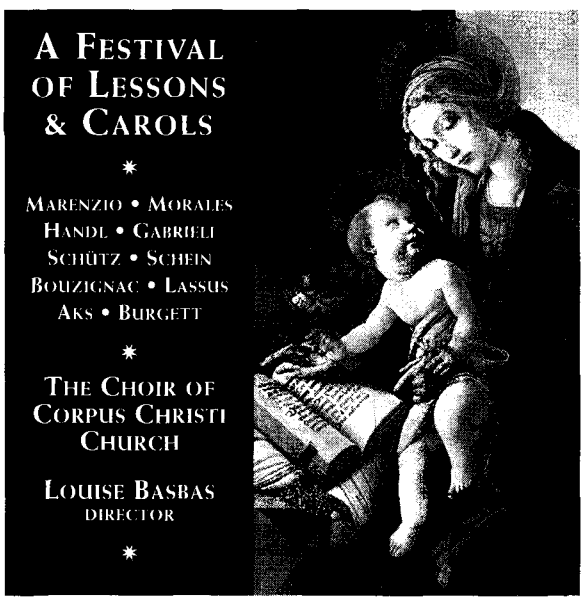
Nordstrom's heady era inaugurated an explosion of picture books. Thanks to her we can now buy or borrow heaps of wonderful books—unless we can't find them in the thicket of ephemeral books dolled up by eye-popping (but static!) pictures made possible by new printing technologies. Into this surfeited scene, Ungerer's *Flix* boldly reasserts the momentousness of the well-crafted picture book, telling the story of a dog born to cat parents, who lives with increasing comfort in both cultures, campaigns for mutual respect between dogs and cats, and who, after marrying a French poodle (an exchange student at Flix's university), becomes the delighted father of a kitten. *Flix* is a very funny book, with unbelievably droll pictures, low jokes, and visual puns like the statue of Saint Bernard—yes, the breed—in Dog City Cathedral. *Flix*'s true subject? Quotidian cruelty and decency, human solitude, the transforming power of love, as understood by an artist courageous and loving enough to describe the human condition to little ones. It is good to have this sophisticated believer in the moral intelligence of children back among us.

There are many more great new books, but let me just mention in closing three for older readers. Peg Kehret's *Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio* (Albert Whitman, $14.95, 179 pp.) is a plain-style account of twelve-year-old Kehret's paralyzing affliction with polio in 1949, and her painful recovery of movement and ability to walk. There are a million life lessons in the book (both for parents and children) and not one maudlin line. Teen-agers and adults, gird yourself for the forthcoming conclusion to Philip Pullman's fantastical *His Dark Materials* trilogy, by reading or rereading *The Golden Compass* (Knopf, $20, 399 pp.) and *The Subtle Knife* (Knopf, $20, 326 pp.). It looks like Lyra Belacqua and her companion Will Parry, questing and hunted travelers between worlds and times, are going to replay the Fall of Man. These amazing novels almost persuade me that, in the modern world, blasphemy may be the most potent mode of asserting and wrestling with belief in God. □

Daria Donnelly *will be writing regularly on children's books for* Commonweal.

The perfect Christmas gift!

Polyhymnia Recordings presents a new CD to celebrate Advent and Christmastide



Scripture readings alternate with carefully chosen musical selections—Renaissance and Baroque polyphony, and compositions commissioned specifically for this performance—sung by an exceptional professional choir in an acoustically ideal setting.

"Ms. Basbas's highly polished choir gave the new works vibrant, persuasive readings...gripping performances...of the earlier works."
—The New York Times

($15.00 plus $2.50 shipping & handling.)

Make checks payable to: The Friends of Liturgical Music. Mail to: The Friends of Liturgical Music, Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121 Street, New York, NY 10027. For information and rates for multiple copies, call: (212) 666-0675. **Also available by the Choir: Pange Lingua, Music for the Feast of Corpus Christi.**

The Choir of Corpus Christi Church can be heard each Sunday at 11:15 A.M.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the woodshed

The Death of Outrage
Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals
William J. Bennett
The Free Press, $20, 154 pp.

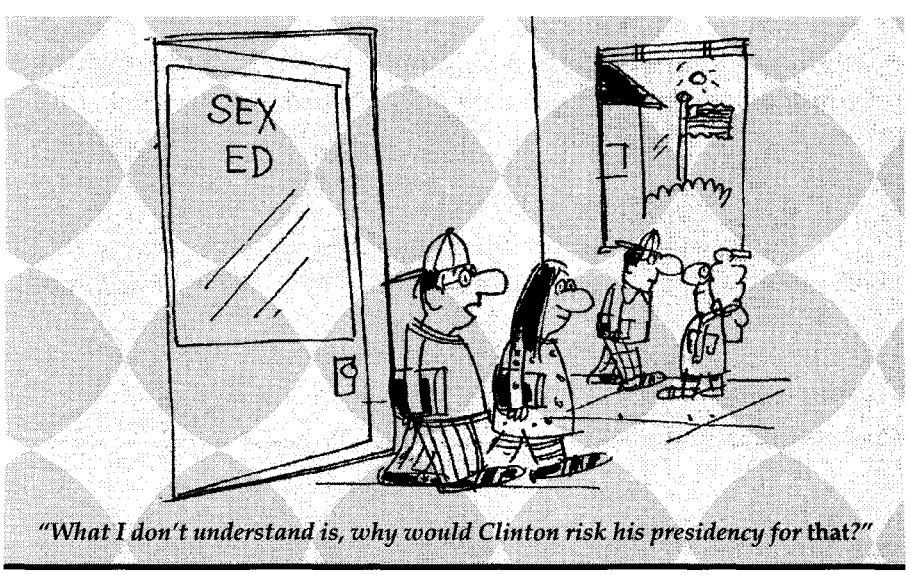
David McCabe

Bill Bennett's mad as hell and he's not going to take it anymore. You can't blame him, really. Even though events of the last year have surely exceeded the wish list of any of Bill Clinton's foes—the expansion of the independent counsel's investigation into the president's relationship with a White House intern, Clinton's emphatic and very public lie to the nation, his petty evasion and possible perjury in legal proceedings, and the embarrassing litany of his sexual idiosyncrasies—what is still missing is the final payoff that his opponents clamor for with increasing fervor: general denunciation of his job as president and insistence on his removal from office. The public's palpable desire that the Lewinsky matter be done with, and its continued approval of Clinton's performance in office, must be bitter ashes in the mouths of his enemies. Their wildest dreams have come true save the one that matters most.

This book hopes to deliver the *coup de grâce*, to make the American public as outraged as Bennett believes they should be. Simplifying a bit, the argument involves two steps. First, persuade readers that Clinton's handling of the Lewinsky affair (and other scandals) reveals serious flaws in his moral character. Second, show that the existence of these flaws makes him unsuitable for his office.

On the first, Bennett largely succeeds. Some, though, may question the need for the lesson. I for one would have thought that by now certain traits of Clinton had been irrevocably revealed: that he is a man willing to do whatever it takes to advance both himself and his causes (in that order), that he is sorely and probably pathologically tempted by pleasures of the flesh, that he has a capacity for self-deception rivaled only by certain heroes of tragic drama, that he is a man one should trust no farther than one can throw. The problem, of course, is that this is only part of the picture: that his vitality, intelligence, and powers of persuasion make him in American politics a virtual force of nature; that he has directly and at some political risk attempted to address neglected issues of basic justice; that he has articulated a vision of the nation's future far more compelling and humane than any offered by his rancorous and increasingly vindictive opponents—these characteristics must also be established pretty clearly in the minds of most Americans.

If anything justifies our national obsession with the Clinton presidency, it is precisely this combination of moral commitment and political ruthlessness. We've known each in isolation (Carter and Nixon), but their commingling in one man leaves us uncertain. Here we come to the second, more difficult step of Bennett's indictment, in which he argues that the president's unsavory character and naked drive for self-advancement make him unfit for office. It is a point that few people in America are either more qualified or more inclined to establish: Bennett holds a Ph.D. in political philosophy, is fluent in moral argument, and serves unofficially as the nation's morals czar. And the question he's addressing is one the Clinton presidency raises with special urgency. For even if it's true, as the more *realpolitik* Democrats argue, that Clinton's character flaws are not especially egregious compared with those of many who have achieved that office, never before have we had to confront them so directly, and packaged in a man whose preternatural glibness makes him appear so much more sinis-



"What I don't understand is, why would Clinton risk his presidency for that?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter than any of his predecessors. (Imagine Ronald Reagan trying to make a point by distinguishing the meanings of the present tense.)

Though Bennett's case against the president occasionally slips into stale metaphor (there's talk of "moral disarmament" and "moral bankruptcy"), his central argument is clear: tolerance for Clinton constitutes an irresponsible failure to uphold important moral values and, given the unique position of the presidency in American culture, threatens to erode those moral standards that reflect our nation's greatest accomplishment. Bennett is surely right to be sharply impatient with those who respond to the president's transgressions with a noncommittal "Who are we to judge?" A human being who resists all such judgments is not tolerant—he's monstrous, and a community of such citizens is a nightmarish prospect.

The problem with this argument, however, is that the American public have judged. They have judged that a lie in response to a question that should never have been asked, resulting from an inquiry motivated (it's increasingly clear) by political and personal hostility to Bill Clinton, does not constitute a serious betrayal of our constitutional principles. They have judged that subsequent actions to cover up that lie, though misguided, are understandable. And they have judged that engaging in bizarre and unfathomable sexual escapades does not demonstrate moral corruption at the core of one's being. Bennett may disagree, but the disagreement is over which judgment is appropriate, not over the appropriateness of judgment.

In favor of his judgment, Bennett argues that the president has "defiled" and "tarnished" the presidency, and thereby debased the moral standards of our nation. Though I disagree with Bennett's smug assessment of our own nation's record regarding those standards (tolerating millions of Americans' absence of health care, adequate living conditions, and real educational opportunities seem to me a much clearer sign of moral corruption than Clinton's occasional trysts), I share his belief that citizens must be united by more than mere

Portsmouth Abbey

Beautifully situated on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, the Abbey of Saint Gregory the Great in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, is a Benedictine monastic community, faithful to the Church's teachings, dedicated to a serious life of prayer, and centered on the Eucharist, spiritual reading, and the important work of educating and forming young men and women. The coeducational boarding school (grades 9–12) which we administer is committed to handing on the faith in the context of high liturgical, academic, and moral standards.

Address inquiries to: The Director of Vocations,
The Abbey — 285 Cory's Lane
Portsmouth, RI 02871-1352
Telephone: 401/683-2000; Fax: 401/683-5888
E-mail: fatherambrose@portsmouthabbey.org.

RELIGION & SCHOLARSHIP

Present Positions. Future Prospects?

March 5-6, 1999 ❋ University of Notre Dame

Scholarship Concerning Religion: Present Positions and Future Prospects

Philip Quinn, *Philosophy*
University of Notre Dame
Harold Attridge, *New Testament*
Yale Divinity School
Jon Butler, *History*
Yale University
Nancy Ammerman, *Sociology*
Hartford Theological Seminary
George Lindbeck, *Theology*
Yale Divinity School
Brian Daley S.J., *Theology*
University of Notre Dame
Daniel Levine, *Political Science*
University of Michigan
Lamin Sanneh, *Missions, World Christianity*
Yale Divinity School

Scholarship Grounded in Religion: Should We? How Could We?

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Philosophy*
Yale Divinity School
Richard Bernstein, *Philosophy*
New York School for Social Research
Roger Lundin, *English*
Wheaton College
Alan Wolfe, *Sociology*
Boston University
Serene Jones, *Theology*
Yale Divinity School
John McGreevy, *History*
University of Notre Dame
Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Political Theory*
Divinity School, University of Chicago

Sponsored by: *The Lilly Seminar on Religion and Higher Education*
810 Flanner Hall, University of Notre Dame,
Notre Dame, IN 46556; Phone: 219-631-4097; e-mail: Ring.5@nd.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economic exchange and geographical proximity, that unity around shared norms and symbols is critical to a healthy polity. And it is true, as Bennett says, both that we need moral exemplars and that presidents have often filled that role in our national consciousness.

But, alas, this last presumption is no longer viable (if it ever was), and his reliance on it lends to Bennett's argument an air of nostalgia that undermines its persuasiveness. We can have no illusions about what it takes to get elected president today: the process surpasses both legislating and sausage-making in its power to disgust. Presidential campaigns, which are today chiefly money-driven, media-driven, and poll-driven, could not be designed any more effectively to eliminate individuals of integrity and principle. Nor should we expect candidates forced to trawl in the depths of presidential electioneering to smell as sweet as before the process; readers may have cheered when Beowulf emerged from the swamp after slaying Grendel's mother, but he must have stunk to high heaven. Given the realities of our political scene today, the American public may just have decided to put up with some rank offense in the White House in the name of other, more important principles.

This is not meant as a counsel of despair: good people are working against awesome odds to ensure that candidates can get elected who possess qualities more laudable than the coolly reptilian fixation on winning that Clinton's career displays and that Bennett presents so clearly. But such hopes are for the future. For now, Clinton is ours, and the public's sufferance of his failings, while dispiriting to some, probably just represents their adaptation to a dismal political landscape that can inspire in any sensible person only rage or indifference. At the end of his life, Heidegger suggested that the human condition was so dismal that only a God could save us. One hopes that the health of our political system will not require deliverance of the same magnitude. □

David McCabe *teaches philosophy at Colgate University.*

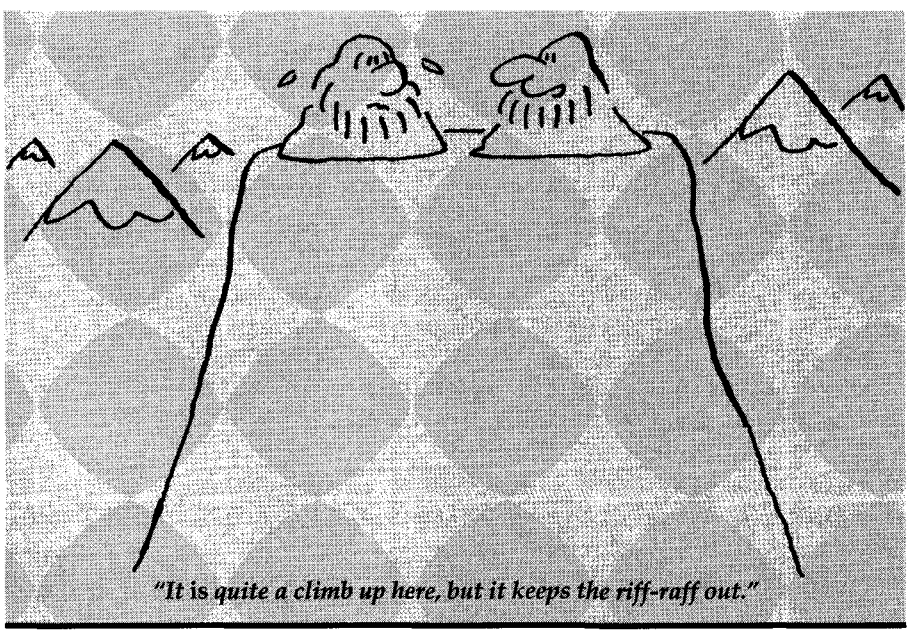
CHRISTIANITY AT EBB TIDE

From the Holy Mountain
A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East
William Dalrymple
Henry Holt, $30, 483 pp.

Paul Kaldjian

In A.D. 587, the Byzantine traveler-monk, John Moschos, began a thirty-year journey across Egypt, Palestine, the Levant, and Anatolia, to collect the memorable sayings, anecdotes, and holy stories known throughout the region's monasteries and Christian communities. His travel memoir, *The Spiritual Meadow*, became widely known and translated across the Byzantine world. With the inspiration of the monk and a translation of *Meadow* as spiritual and tour guides, the Scottish journalist William Dalrymple set out to learn what remains of the people and places that John Moschos visited a millennium-and-a-half ago. *From the Holy Mountain* is the log of Dalrymple's observations and reflections on his journey from Mount Athos—*the* Holy Mountain, where the original manuscripts of *The Spiritual Meadow* are kept—in Northern Greece, to the ruins of the Lavra of the Great Oasis in Kharga, Upper Egypt.

For three hundred years, Christianity, in its early, multiple, and frequently bizarre interpretations, was the primary religion of much of the Middle East. In *From the Holy Mountain*, we read about Byzantine saints, sophists, and ascetics. We meet monks who perched on pillars and lived in trees, other monks who waged violent battle against immorality, and hermits who, having bathed once in Christ, believed that bathing was no longer a necessity: "and believe me, my brothers, I, Pambo, this least one, smelt the good odor of that brother from a mile away." There is also the repentant bandit, filled with the desire to become a monk. However, the local abbot was reluctant to admit the repentant thief, who in turn replied, "Know then that I am David the robber chief; and the reason I came here was that I might weep for my sins. If you do not accept me, I swear to you and before him who dwells in heaven, that I will return to my former way of life. I will



"It is quite a climb up here, but it keeps the riff-raff out."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bring those who were with me, kill you all, and even destroy your monastery." It is reported that David went on to "exceed all the other members of the monastery in self-control, obedience, and humility."

John Moschos's sixth-century account marked the beginnings of the disappearance of Christianity from the Middle East. Consequently, Dalrymple is compelled to document Christianity's final stages in the region. He talks with monks, priests, lay Christians, and others about their pasts and presents. In contrast to the difficulties faced by today's Middle Eastern Christians, he learns that the spaces and theologies of Christianity and Islam have been intertwined historically far more closely than current conflicts suggest. There are numerous similarities between the practices of Muslims and Christians, and among the holy places where each prays, petitions, and gives thanks. In fact, many in the past believed, like the seventh-century theologian Saint John Damascene, that Islam, rather than being a separate religion, was another new and heretical form of Christianity. Such associations from the early stages of each religion may help explain Islam's traditional tolerance of religious minorities and how Islam was able to convert much of the Middle Eastern population so quickly.

From the Holy Mountain portrays a Middle East very different from stereotypes. There are Muslims and Christians that still visit each other's shrines. Persecuted Palestinian Christians in Lebanon find refuge not among local Christians but declare, "The Muslims treated us very well....The Muslims I know are better Christians than most Christians." The Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan asserts, "Christians in Syria are better off in Syria than anywhere else in the Middle East." This is in stark contrast to the level of daily difficulty and fear faced by today's Christians in Israel, Turkey, and Egypt, ironically the United States' closest friends in the region. Even the Ottoman Empire, until the emergence of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, was built on a system that encouraged religious tolerance and ethnic diversity. These are not impressions generally gathered from the nightly news.

Dalrymple does not hide his opinion of aggressive West Bank settlement; of politicized archeology in Israel; of the role Maronite Christians played in the destruction of Lebanon; of the official versions of Israeli and Turkish history regarding Palestinian, Greek, and Armenian Christians; or of the oppression of Coptic Christians by Muslim fundamentalists in Egypt.

The disappearance of Christians from throughout the Middle East has drastically accelerated in the twentieth century and, within a generation, what Dalrymple has documented will in all likelihood no longer exist. The loss has its cost. One Lebanese academic says that, "It is the Christian Arabs who keep the Arab world 'Arab' rather than 'Muslim.' It is the Christian Arabs who show that Arabs and Muslims are two different things....Many Muslims [and, certainly, Christians in North America] regard Arab history as having little meaning by itself, outside the context of Islam." Similarly, the difficulties of Christians under Israeli rule and their subsequent mass migration from Jerusalem and the surrounding regions mean that the "most important shrines in the Christian world will be left as museum pieces....Christianity will no longer exist in the Holy Land as a living faith."

As fine a job as Dalrymple does of weaving the accounts and anecdotes of John Moschos into his travels, of distilling a vast amount of secondary sources into a presentation very accessible to the lay reader (without boring the academic), and of compassionately capturing the origins, perspectives, and plight of Middle East Christians, his portrayal of other Middle Easterners at times teeters between elitist and rude. On taking an overnight bus in Turkey, Dalrymple writes, "The rutted roads, the bracing crash of the long-defunct suspension, the snoring Anatolian peasants: these one expects and can bear. What is intolerable is the deliberate regime of sleep deprivation imposed on all passengers by this driver and his henchman, the

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

Theological education in an ecumenical setting where Roman Catholic students are the largest group in the student body

■

Special faculty resources include the Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies & the Counselor for Roman Catholic students

■

Rigorous academic & practical preparation for lay & scholarly ministries, enriched by the resources of the Boston Theological Institute

For information on admissions & financial aid:
Admissions Office, Harvard Divinity School, 45 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 ■ (617) 495-5796

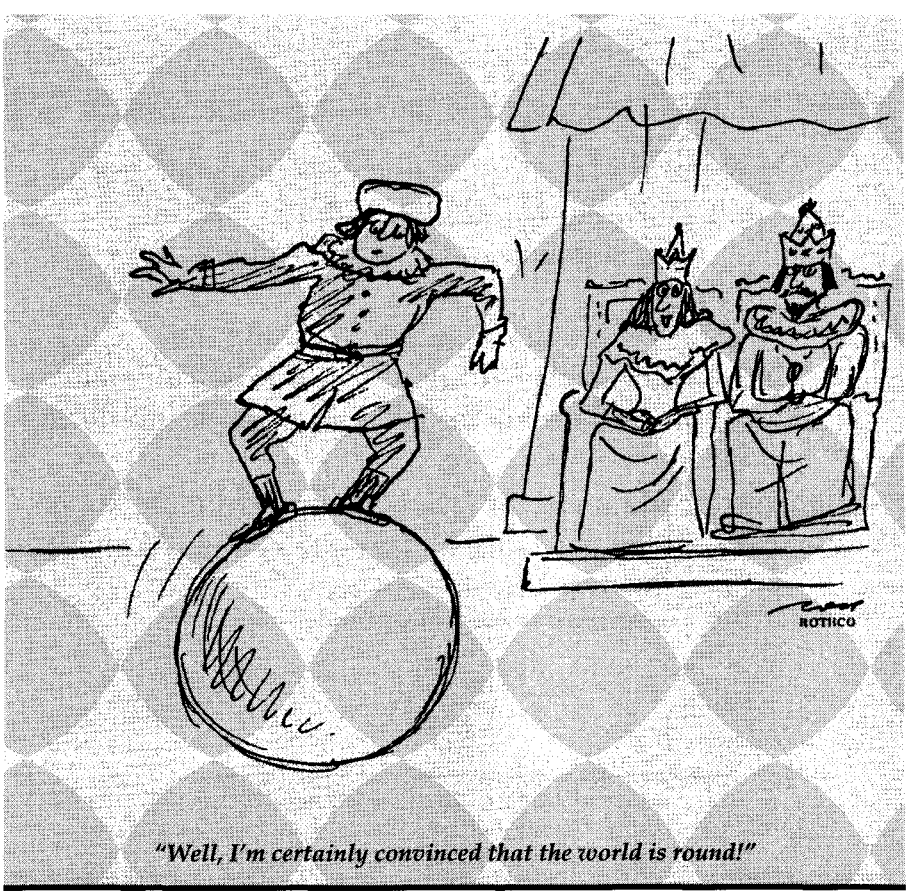
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moustachioed Neanderthal of a conductor." As anyone who has traveled by bus in Anatolia knows, you get what you pay for. More to the point, the sarcasm used to portray the rural places and peasants of Turkey and Syria suggests stereotypes one would expect his book to avoid. The insulting descriptions distract from his critical analyses, and can easily sabotage good intentions and constructive dialogue.

Certainly, five months of traveling overland in the Middle East will test one's endurance; fortunately, this ascetic experience seems to have taken the cynical edge off Dalrymple. By the end of his journey, he seems more serene and is able to describe harmonious relationships between Muslims and Christians not as oddities or with surprise, but as eminently reasonable and right. Like the sisters at the Convent of Seidnaya in Syria who gracefully accept the petitions and prayers of Muslims, Dalrymple drops the language of difference. It is as if his five months of living with John Moschos, the wisdom of the desert fathers, and the faithfulness of today's monks has had a tonsuring effect on him.

From the Holy Mountain is at once a window into the early years of Christianity—a Christianity quite dissociated from the institutions with which we are most familiar in North America—and a contemporary picture of a community of Christians equally remote from North Americans. John Moschos and his earlier contemporaries lived closer in time, space, and culture to Jesus of Nazareth than we do to Columbus or the Pilgrims. And yet, consensus on interpreting and living the message of Christ appears to have been as unattainable then as it is today. As it is now, Christianity in its early years was full of spiritual searching, conflict, and uncertainty. Recognizing this encourages a less categorical and more constructive understanding of the peoples and religions of the contemporary Middle East. □

Paul Kaldjian *is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Arizona.*



"Well, I'm certainly convinced that the world is round!"

CLASSIFIED

RATES: $1.10 per word; 12 word minimum. Discounts 5 percent, 3 times; 10 percent, 6 times; 15 percent, 12 times. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information call 212-662-4200 or write COMMONWEAL, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 405, N.Y., N.Y. 10115.

Manuscripts Wanted

MANUSCRIPTS WANTED. ALL TYPES. Subsidy Publisher with 75-year tradition. 1-800-695-9599.

Scotland Tour

LATE JULY – EARLY AUGUST 1999 including Northern England. Small Group. Reverend Griffie: (606) 573-9771.

Position Available

SCHOOL OF THE HOLY CHILD, Rye, New York, Head of School, July 1999.

Located on a seventeen-acre estate in the southern Westchester community of Rye, Holy Child is an independent, Catholic, college preparatory school for young women founded by the Sisters of the Holy Child in 1904. In the educational tradition of the foundress, Cornelia Connelly, Holy Child seeks to foster and develop individuals capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning and growth, aware of their own value, and willing to involve themselves in service to others.

The school currently enrolls 229 students in grades 5–12. Staffed by a dedicated group of 37 full- and part-time faculty and administrators, the school is academically challenging and provides a liberal arts curriculum appropriate to students' needs, interests, and abilities.

The school's yearly budget is approximately $3 million. Financial aid and scholarship awards represent 12 percent of tuition revenues. The school raises $400,000 annually from charitable donations, including the annual fund.

Interested candidates should send a letter of interest, statement of educational philosophy, current résumé, and the names of five professional references to: Gregory Floyd, Vice President, Browning Associates, P.O. Box 671, Ipswich, MA 01938. Application deadline: December 4, 1998.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Peter Feuerherd

As I write, I can hear Mildred and Sam in the next apartment, as usual, yelling at each other.

It's one of the benefits of living in a New York apartment: there's always a drama going on. Is that why so many writers gravitate to apartment living? The stories are right there through the thin walls next to the breakfast nook.

"Seinfeld" has offered the nation an image of New York apartment living as a kind of singles dorm where over-aged adolescents walk through unlocked doors and banter in a party-all-the-time atmosphere.

Reality, of course, is very different. Even in Mayor Rudy's idyllic near-crime-free city, no sane person would leave an apartment door open. And many New York apartment buildings, like mine, are filled not with yuppie singles but with older adults. Nearly everyone is past sixty, and some are bearing down on the century mark. Instead of a college dorm, our building is more like a nursing home. If I were living in the suburbs, as a forty-one-year-old, I'd be firmly ensconced in middle age. Living in my Queens apartment building, I'm still something of a young Turk.

Mildred and Sam fit right in, agewise. They moved here with many of the other tenants after World War II. In fact, they are contemporaries of Ricky and Lucy, who on TV reruns are forever young and forever in the same apartment. New York renters stay put, especially if they have rent-controlled apartments. The result is a combination of stagnation and stability. It's as if Ricky and Lucy are still where they are on television, frozen in place by their 1950s-style rent, but now too old to go out hoofing with Fred and Ethel.

In the style of New York apartment living, we know our neighbors enough to say hello. Most are gentle and pleasant people living out their retirement years. A few are infirm. All in all, we exist amidst a cultivated and pleasant distance that suits all parties fine, such as the older Jewish woman who made sure to leave me a vacant washer in the laundry room last month and wished me, her Christian neighbor, a happy holy day last Christmas.

But that is not the case with Sam and Mildred. We have been forced into a kind of intense long-term relationship in a way we never could have imagined. They are like uninvited visitors who barge through our apartment walls, carrying on an argument which has been going on in various forms for decades. Sam is wheelchair-bound because of a stroke and dependent on Mildred for everything—an uneasy dependence, it is fair to say.

In a family magazine, one can't even begin to describe the tone of their verbal abuse. She will complain about his incontinence, his slurred speech, his demands to be fed. The "f" word is a regular part of her banter. Her trump card is a warning: if he doesn't shape up, he will be sent to a nursing home. Sam gives as good as he takes. "You b...," he yells at the top of his lungs, the words slurred but the meaning intact.

Sam and Mildred are legendary in the building. We live on the first floor of a six-story building, but tenants on the top floor tell us they can be heard there. And apparently Sam and Mildred were at it long before we moved in three years ago. In their younger days, he owned a business and held the upper hand in their relationship. He would yell at her; now, in his dependence, he mostly gets it from her.

Their arguments are now part of the background noise, only highlighted when a visitor asks what's going on next door. My fifteen-year-old nephew, who lives in a quiet suburb, expressed a fascination with the arguments during a recent visit. "Cool," he said, listening in on a verbal blast from next door, experiencing a kind of warped vicarious adolescent thrill.

There are times I wished I lived in a "Seinfeld"-type apartment universe, where hip yuppies closer to my age share common insights into life. Or maybe a house in the suburbs in a community where parents come together and enjoy the routine swirl of children's soccer games and high school proms, then retreat to their homes, all at a safe distance from one another.

But my neighbors, even Sam and Mildred, offer their own kind of insights and lessons. They are old. Someday I may be old. They are reminders that what I am now—my relationships, idiosyncracies, habits, obsessions—are sure to remain with me, for better or worse.

Miserable old arguments will continue. So will happy relationships. Old age is part of the continuum of life; it promises no abrupt change from the past.

Sam and Mildred's regular arguments remind me every day that the important relationships, husband and wife, parent and child, can never be taken for granted. Just beyond my wall is a loud statement that misery begets misery, and that the cycle of recrimination practiced upon those we are supposed to love is a long, lonely road to nowhere or the bare walls of an apartment in Queens. □

Peter Feuerherd *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Moment of Thanks *for* A Lifetime of Service

"Retired" Ursuline Sister Anthony Wargel continues *a lifetime of service* in ministry as a volunteer tutor. She and Molly study together in the library of St. John Neuman School in Columbia, South Carolina, and share in the joy of learning. People everywhere will have the opportunity to show *a moment of thanks* to our nation's religious in the annual **Retirement Fund for Religious** collection held in most dioceses December 12-13, 1998. Your contribution will help offset their more than $7 billion in unfunded retirement needs and ensure that the more than 45,000 elderly sisters, brothers, and order priests will receive adequate care.

Please give generously to the **Retirement Fund for Religious** collection in your parish.

Or you may wish to send your donation to:

Retirement Fund for Religious

Attention: Sister Mary Leahy, SP

P.O. Box 73140 Dept. D, Baltimore MD 21273

Photo courtesy of the Ursuline Sisters, Louisville, Kentucky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED